Special Report

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"The White House is a bully pulpit"

Theodore Roosevelt

The American Presidents

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In Line Unbroken

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Washington, John Adams and Jefferson in front of Congress Hall, Philadelphia (1793).

Though it was a momentous event, there was something faintly comical about it. John Adams, a militant spirit but a most unmilitary man, taking oath as the second President of an infant and feeble nation, wore a sword and a cockade. Thomas Jefferson, the new Vice President, a Virginia aristocrat, wore republican blue. Outgoing President George Washington, undoubtedly the most gladdened member of the group (Adams imagined Washington saying, "Ay, I am fairly out and you are fairly in. See which of us will be happiest") wore black, as if in mourning. As the three prepared to depart from Philadelphia's Congress Hall, they paused for a perplexed moment. What should be the order of their leaving? Washington—as was his custom—made the decision. John Adams, President of the United States of America, should go first, followed by Vice President Thomas Jefferson and, finally, by George Washington, private citizen.

At the time—March 4, 1797—the incident achieved scant notice. But it was no trifling matter: sanctified by a pinch of protocol which is observed to this day, a new Constitution had passed a major test, and the U.S.'s first transfer of power had taken place, quietly and under the law of the land.

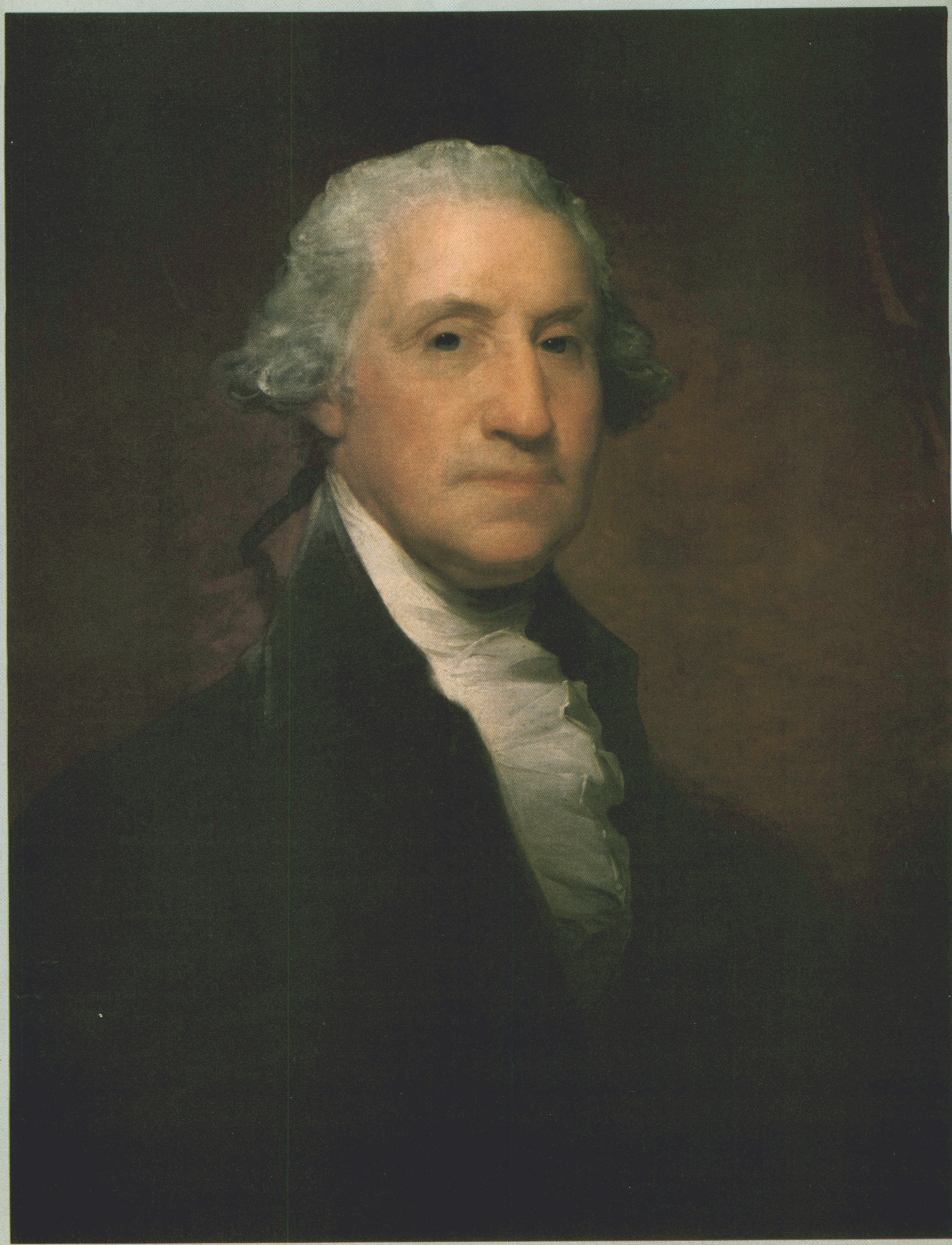
"No man should be expected or permitted to wield the power of the Presidency without the clearest of titles to it," Presidential Historian Clinton Rossiter has written. "Whatever arguments may exist for the grand doctrine that all power must be first of all legitimate apply twice as severely to the power that is lodged in the American Presidency." As the nation commemorates its Bicentennial year, the strength of the Presidency derives from its legitimacy: no President has sought, like Caesar, to perpetuate himself in office; there has been no usurpation, political or otherwise; no military man on horseback has seized power; no foreign incursion has interrupted the Presidential succession. From George Washington to Gerald Ford, 37 men have held clear title to the Presidency in line unbroken.

Eight Presidents have died in office, four of them by assassination, and one has resigned; yet the succession has remained orderly, thanks in large part to a determined Virginia gentleman named John Tyler. He was Vice President in 1841, when William Henry Harrison became the first incumbent President to die. Because of a syntactic snarl in the Constitution, there was some doubt as to whether a succeeding Vice President would become President in full title or merely Acting President. But Tyler had no doubts whatever: hurrying from his Virginia home to Washington, he went immediately to Brown's Indian Queen Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue, summoned the Chief Justice of the Circuit Court of the District of Columbia, and took his oath—as President. And when the first paper to come to his deck was marked "Acting President John Tyler," he calmly crossed out the "Acting." Thus was precedent set and practice established.

Safeguarding the succession is and must be a foremost consideration in the mind of any President or Vice President, especially during the alarums and excursions that inevitably follow an assassination. Lyndon Baines Johnson risked—and received—criticism for what seemed to many to be his unseemly haste in being sworn in only two hours after the death of John F. Kennedy, with Kennedy's widow, her skirt still bloodstained, at his side. But Johnson had ample justification. He later recalled the thoughts that had passed through his mind during his flight, as President, back to Washington on Air Force One: "I wasn't sure whether this was an international conspiracy, or just what it was, or what might happen next. I was sure that the whole nation had been shaken and the world would be in doubt. As I rode back, I recognized that our first great problem was to assure the world that there would be continuity in transition, that our constitutional system would work."

Implicit in the pages of this Special Report, which presents a profile of each of the Presidents, is a bias—a bias in favor of the American Presidency and of the men who have occupied that office. Some were abler than others, of higher intellect and character, of greater achievement. But one and all have preserved the legitimacy whence springs the strength of the Presidency.

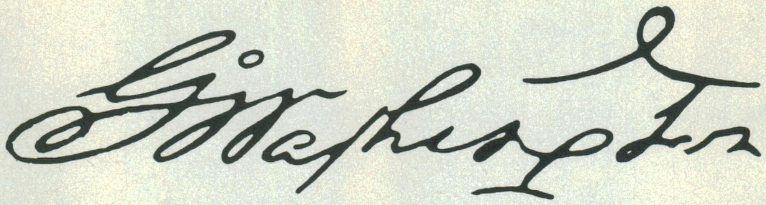
The Editors of TIME



Painting by Gilbert Stuart: National Gallery of Art, Washington. Andrew Mellon Collection

George Washington (1789-1797)

I have seen without despondency (even for a moment)
the hours which America has styled her gloomy ones.



The Commander in Chief was reconnoitering near White Plains, N.Y., when a courier dashed up, crying: "The British are on the camp, Sir!" The general galloped full tilt back to camp, where he was told that his outposts had been beaten in. He turned to his officers. "Gentlemen," said George Washington, "you will repair to your respective posts and do the best you can."

George Washington always did the best he could—and it was enough to create and sustain a nation. Perhaps he provided the key to his own achievements. "We ought not to look back," he once wrote, "unless it is to derive useful lessons from past errors."

His learning was hard-earned. His father, big "Gus" Washington, a Virginia land speculator and iron-mine owner, died when George was eleven, leaving him with a querulous mother whom he spent much of his life trying to avoid. He had less formal education than any other early American President, picking up enough math to get started as a surveyor and painstakingly copying 110 "Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior." Samples: "Cleanse not your teeth with the tablecloth," and "Labor to keep alive in your breast that little spark of celestial fire called conscience."

There is something not quite pleasant about the young Washington. As a soldier rising to colonel in Virginia's militia, he was forever squabbling with British authorities about "honor" and "preferment," which seemed synonymous in his mind. He was less than modest: "I can truly say and confidently assert that no soldiers were ever under better command," he said, speaking of his own men. But he was also—and always—brave. After his first battle, in which he defeated a French force near Fort Duquesne in the Western wilderness, he reported: "I heard the bullets whistle, and, believe me, there is something charming in the sound." During the woodlands massacre of Britain's General Edward Braddock and his forces, Washington had two horses shot from beneath him, his coat shredded by bullets that not only whistled but pierced. Years later, as the American Commander in Chief at Princeton, he rode to within 30 yards of the British line and (as an aide covered his own face with his hat so as not to see what must surely happen) survived the crossfire between enemy troops and his own.

In 1758, at age 26, he left military service and settled into Mount Vernon, the family estate on the Potomac. There he spent the next 17 years of his life, and there he may be caught in the cameo of repose. By the standards of his day he was immense, standing, as he described himself, "6 ft. high" (though after his death his secretary measured him at 6 ft. 3½ in.), weighing nearly 200 lbs., with huge hands and feet (size 13 boots), chestnut hair and light smallpox scars on the end of his nose. He married 27-year-old Martha Custis, one of the wealthiest widows in America (her inheritance was reckoned at £23,632), who was barely 5 ft. tall and, whenever she wished to speak to him, had to pluck at his coat buttons for attention. Besides farming, Washington served quietly but effectively in the Virginia House of Burgesses where, as a member named Thomas Jefferson noted, he was "in action cool, like a bishop at his prayers."

As his long sojourn neared its end, he was elected to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia, and there, because he was the most experienced officer from a militarily and politically strategic state, he was unanimously named head of the revolutionary army. The date: June 15, 1775.

On the eve of command Washington wrote: "I am now embarked on a tempestuous ocean, from whence, perhaps, no friendly harbor is to be found." Not many privies were to be found either in the Continental encampments outside Boston, and one of Washington's first acts was to protest that shortage. It was, for him, too often that kind of niggling war. But he learned as he went along, and on the bloodstained road that led to Yorktown, he made some major discoveries: this war went by no Old World book; in the American vastness, mere territorial gains meant little; mobility was the key, and even the fleetness of foot which his men often displayed when things went badly could be an advantage—they could run and live to fight another day. Valley Forge was a nadir best described by a member of the Connecticut Line: "Poor food—hard lodging—cold weather—fatigue—nasty clothes—nasty cookery—vomit half my time—smoked out of my senses—the devil's in it—I can't endure it." But Washington made good use even of those grim days: he turned his ragtags over to the Prussian drillmaster Steuben, who made soldiers of them. And finally, unbelievably, it was all over: George Washington was free to return to "the shadow of my own vine and my own fig tree."

But not for long. He watched restively as the frail coalition of former colonies began to fall apart, and when a call came to go to Philadelphia, he was ready. On May 25, 1787, he was unanimously named president of the Constitutional Convention. For four months, he sat on a low dais, taking almost no part in the debate. But it is entirely possible that there would have been no Constitution had it not been for Washington's presence, and it is almost certain that the Constitution would not have taken the form it did had it not been for the expectation that Washington would be the first President. Wrote Pierce Butler, a Maryland delegate: "Many of the members cast their eyes toward General Washington as President, and shaped their ideas of the powers to be given to a President by their opinions of his virtue." In New York's Federal Hall, on April 30, 1789, after unanimous election, George Washington was sworn in as the first President of the United States.

He was keenly conscious of being the first. "I walk on untrodden ground," he wrote. "There is scarcely any part of my conduct which may not hereafter be drawn into precedent." Thus he set about creating precedents—on everything from Presidential protocol to constitutional meanings. Example: unsure about the requirement that the President have both the "advice" and the "consent" of the Senate on treaties, he appeared before the Senate in person to present a proposed pact with the Creek Indians. After two tedious days of bickering, he left declaring that he would be "damned if he ever went there again." He never did, and to this day Senate advice has taken a back seat to Senate consent.

He was 62, weary and worried about his failing memory when, with great reluctance, he accepted a second term—again by unanimous vote. As at Princeton years before, he was once more caught between hostile firing lines, this time the opposing political forces of Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton and Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson. But Washington endured. At the same time, he performed one of his greatest services to his country: in the explosive aftermath of the French Revolution, he insisted that the U.S. remain neutral and unentangled in Europe's wars. Excepting only the twitch that was the War of 1812, Washington's policy remained America's until 1917.

He left office on March 4, 1797, returning to his beloved Mount Vernon. There, on a December morning in 1799, he awakened Martha to say that he was suffering ague, but he refused to let her summon a servant lest, in getting out of bed, she catch cold herself. He continued to sicken, and in his final seconds he felt his own pulse, silently counting to the beat of faint and fading drums.

Painting by William Winstanley: Adams National Historic Site, Quincy

John Adams (1797-1801)

Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I am with my country from this day on.

John Adams

It had begun with a barber's boy taunting a British sentry and ended with five dead in what history (U.S. version) remembers as the Boston Massacre. Now, in this perfervid winter of 1770, before four judges robed in the King's crimson and a jury of twelve good Massachusetts men and true, eight of the hated "Lobsterbacks" were on trial for their part in the affray. The defense had produced witness after witness—more than 50 of them—to swear that a mob had placed the soldiers in fear of their lives. Finally the chief counsel for the defense arose, drawing himself up to his full, plumpish 5 ft. 7 in. "We talk much," he cried, "of life and property. But if we cut up the law of self-defense, we cut away the foundation of both." Incredibly, considering the temper of the province, six of the soldiers were acquitted; the other two, though charged with murder, were found guilty of lesser offenses.

And the lawyer? Was he King's counsel? An unregenerate Tory? Not a bit of it. He was John Adams—Patriot. He had taken the case only after other Boston lawyers had refused. It was of course a highly unpopular cause, but John Adams believed that every man has a right to a fair trial. And what John Adams believed in, he would sink or swim with. He was like that. Boston knew it and, taking its own full measure of the man, elected him as its representative to the General Court even after he had agreed to defend the British soldiers.

John Adams. Honest John. Old Sink-or-Swim. If Washington was the sword of revolution and Jefferson the bugle, then Adams was in twofold sense the mace, standing not only for the symbol of liberty under the authority of law but using words as weapons, delivering blow after blow. Yet unlike his second cousin, Sam Adams, a rebel from embryo, John had not always been such. Indeed, his first attempt at rebellion ended in hasty retreat. Son of a respected but hardly distinguished Braintree, Mass., farmer and cordwainer, John decided early that he intensely disliked Latin grammar. Very well. His father had an alternative: "My meadow yonder needs a ditch..." After two days of ditchdigging, John Adams returned to his Latin books.

Then, at 15, Harvard. Breakfast on bread and beer, natural philosophy under Winthrop, logic under Wigglesworth, a five-shilling fine for swearing—and at the end of it all, a schoolteacher's job in Worcester. He loathed it, and, as he was always to do, he bathed in self-pity: "I have no books, no time, no friends. I must therefore be contented to live and die an ignorant fellow." A welcome emotional change came when some British troops passed through town: "I rejoiced that I was an Englishman, and gloried in the name of Briton!" He read law, and after two years went home to Braintree, where he tried his first case—a lawsuit over a strayed mare, which he lost.

By any accounting (generally including his own), John Adams was conceited, opinionated, self-righteous, denunciatory and aggressively arrogant; yet beneath it all beat a romantic's heart. He loved to "gallant the girls," though evidently without much result: "No virgin or matron ever had cause to blush at the sight of me." But then he began visiting the home of Abigail Smith, a parson's daughter he had known since childhood. One evening he found her reading Locke on *Human Understanding*. "A big book for such a little head," he remarked in his pompous way. "You think so?" replied Abby. "Even a little head, Mr. Adams, may possess a longing for knowledge, or at least for understanding." John was entranced. They were married in 1764—the beginning of a 54-year love affair, perhaps the most tender (and surely the wordiest) in Presidential history.

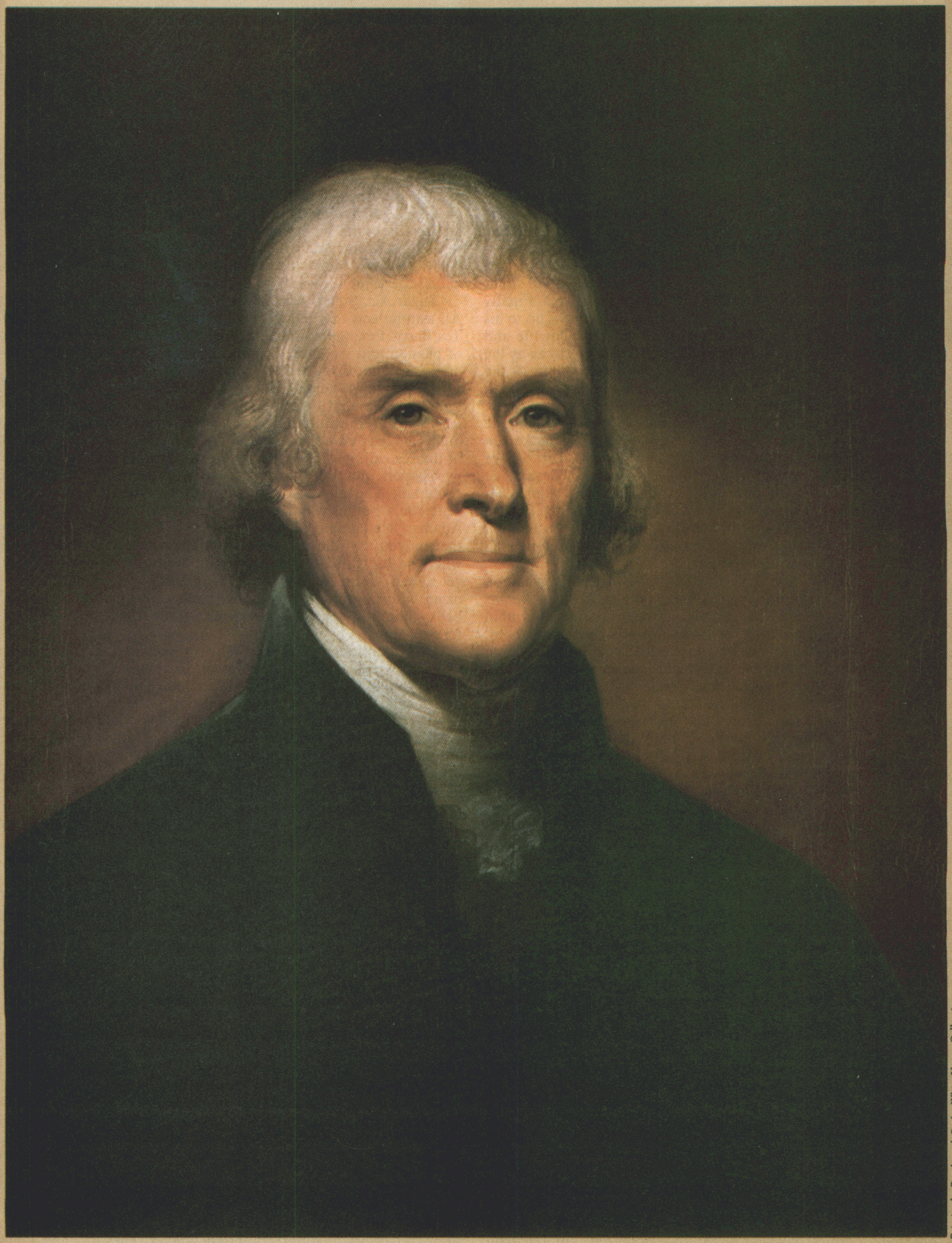
Riding the court circuit, Adams went often to Boston, where some of the ablest lawyers of the day practiced, among them James Otis, who was to shape John Adams' life and the course of empire. In 1761 Britain insisted on enforcing the Writs of Assistance, which gave crown inspectors rights of search and seizure against all ships, warehouses and even private homes where smuggled goods were thought to be concealed. James Otis argued against the writs in Superior Court, and in the audience, enthralled, sat John Adams. No matter that Otis lost. In his old age Adams wrote: "Here this day, in the old Council Chamber, the child Independence was born."

Sugar Act. Stamp Act. Townshend Act. The Intolerable Acts. All asinine acts that led to revolution. Boston Massacre. Boston Tea Party. Lexington and Concord. Bunker Hill. Days and deeds of passion and violence. General Court. First Continental Congress. Second Continental Congress. Revolutionary steppingstones for John Adams. Dreams of military glory danced and bubbled. "Oh, that I were a soldier. I will be! I am reading military books." He would have been wasted. But he could write. At night, his bald pate glistening in the lamplight, he wrote. Tomes of diaries, volumes of letters to Abby, polemics that filled entire newspapers, petitions and protests—he wrote them all. And he could talk. The language of the immortal Declaration was mostly Jefferson's, but his was not a spirit for frontal debate. That fell to Adams. "He came out with a power of thought and expression that moved us from our seats," Jefferson said years later. And when, on July 2, 1776, the Declaration was approved (though not yet signed), John Adams wrote that the day "ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations...from this time forward forevermore."

He did diplomatic time in France (where he signed the Treaty of Paris, which ended the American Revolution) and England. He was not much impressed by either John Bull or Louis Baboon (as he called them). Though he did not participate in the Constitutional Convention, he returned to the U.S. in time to become Washington's Vice President. As such, he both annoyed and amused Senators with his prissy punctilio. When he heard that the President was to address Congress in person, he asked the Senate: "How shall I behave? How shall I receive it? Shall it be standing or sitting?" Other than that, he had little to do but wait out Washington's two terms. "I am heir apparent," he wrote to Abby. He became President on March 4, 1797.

He was the wrong man in the wrong place at the wrong time. Jefferson's Republicans and Hamilton's Federalists were already at each other's throats, and Adams had no gift whatever for conciliation. England and revolutionary France were at war, and Adams was appalled by the mindless ferocity of France's Directory. His policy was to maintain neutrality, while preparing for war—with France. This brought against him sustained and venomous attack from the Jeffersonian press, and the result was the Alien and Sedition Acts. They included penalties for almost everything said or done against the President, his Administration or national policy. Carried to the extent that a Vermont Congressman was sentenced to four months for calling Adams pompous (which he was) in a personal letter, they were Adams' ruination. In 1800 he was defeated for re-election by Jefferson.

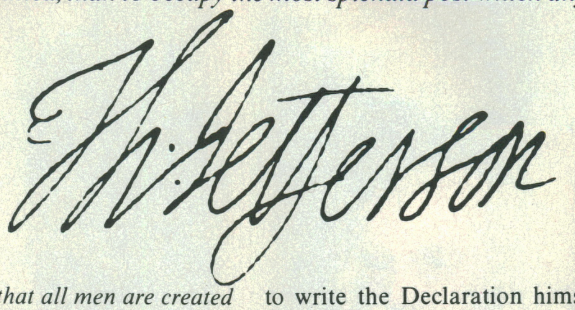
But he lived on—and on and on. He became "the Patriarch of Braintree." He saw a son, John Quincy, become President. And two old friends, turned enemies, became friends again: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson entered into a long and touching correspondence. In July 1826 he was 90 years and eight months old—older than any other American President has lived to be. He was ailing, as was Jefferson. The young nation hoped—and prayed—that the two great champions of liberty could see the 50th anniversary of American independence. They did, and John Adams' last words were, "Thomas Jefferson still survives." He was not quite right: Jefferson had died a few hours earlier.



Painting by Rembrandt Peale: White House Collection

Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809)

I would rather be shut up in a very modest cottage with my books, my family and a few old friends, dining on simple bacon and letting the world roll by as it liked, than to occupy the most splendid post which any human power can give.



We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

After 200 years, the words carry pure as a bugle's call. But the bugler stands behind a veil of his own making. Thomas Jefferson defies his biographers. To Henry Adams, his character could be caught only in "the shifting and uncertain flicker of its semi-transparent shadows." Said Merrill Peterson, author of a massive work: "It is a mortifying confession, but he remains for me, finally, an impenetrable man." Even Dumas Malone, who has spent most of his 84 years on a Pulitzer-prizewinning biography, once admitted: "In my youthful presumptuousness I flattered myself that some time I would fully comprehend and encompass him. I do not claim that I have yet done so, and I do not believe that I or any other single person can."

The most public of men, Thomas Jefferson was the most private of persons. He was a member of Virginia's colonial House of Burgesses and of its revolutionary House of Delegates, an alternate delegate to the Second Continental Congress and a delegate to the Continental Congress elected in 1783, wartime Governor of Virginia, Minister to France, the first U.S. Secretary of State, the second Vice President and (for two terms) the third President. He was, in words he composed for his own epitaph, the "father of the University of Virginia," and he was a founder of the American political party system (though he once said: "If I could not go to heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all"). He was the author of treatises that illumined the way on man's long and continuing progress toward freedom: *A Summary View of the Rights of British America,* the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom—and the Declaration of Independence. He left a legacy of 18,000 letters, many of them written with a crippled hand (the result of an injury suffered when, while walking along the Seine with Maria Cosway, a married woman with whom he had a brief and perhaps platonic affair, he exuberantly vaulted a fence and fell). As collected and indexed in the remarkable *Jeffersonian Cyclopedia* (Funk & Wagnalls, 1900), his writings cover 1,256 subjects, from *abilities* ("Men of high learning and abilities are few in every country") to *zeal* ("I fear that my zeal will make me expose myself to ridicule").

Yet rarely does Thomas Jefferson offer a glimpse of the inner man. Indeed, it seems obvious that he deliberately drew the veil, even destroying the copies—and he did make copies—of his letters to his mother and his wife. Though his pen blazed, his public speaking voice, choked by tension, was guttural and indistinct. Controversial, he dreaded face-to-face confrontations: they gave him migraines. Time after time, he withdrew to the peace and solitude of Monticello in moments of high crisis and drama. In 1774, when he first risked his neck to the King's noose by writing *A Summary View* ("Let not the name of George the Third be a blot in the pages of history"), he set out for Williamsburg to deliver the politically heretical document; but he soon turned back with dysentery, and Peyton Randolph read it for him.

Jefferson was enigmatic even about the Declaration of Independence, though there has never been the slightest doubt that it was written with his heart and soul. When, in 1776, the Continental Congress named a committee of five to write an enunciation of common colonial policy, it was generally assumed that Massachusetts' John Adams would take the lead. But Adams, for perhaps the only time in his life, deferred to another man, declining to write the Declaration himself. A conversation (recorded by Adams) took place that is still being felt round the world:

Jefferson: Why will you not? You ought to do it.

Adams: Reasons enough.

Jefferson: What can be your reasons?

Adams: Reason 1st. You are a Virginian and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason 2nd. I am obnoxious, suspected and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason 3d. You can write ten times better than I can.

Jefferson: Well, if you are decided, I will do as well as I can.

Thomas Jefferson did more than that. Between May 17 and June 28, 1776, in a historic explosion of genius, he wrote both a constitution for Virginia and the Declaration of Independence. But then, when the Declaration came under attack from other members of the Continental Congress, Jefferson sat almost mute while Adams defended it thought for thought.

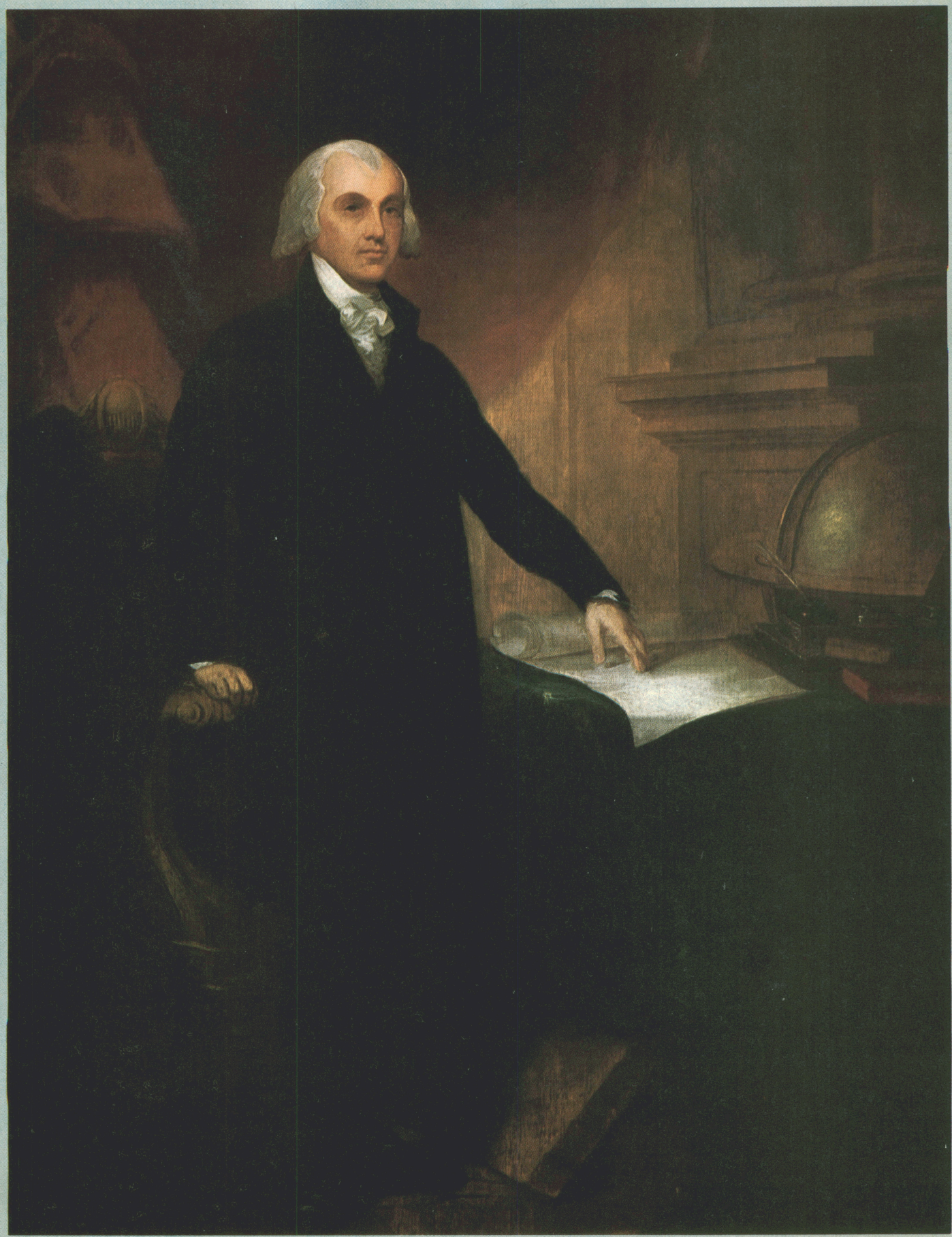
Some years later, the Virginian's great antagonist, Alexander Hamilton, paid a visit to Jefferson, saw three portraits on the wall and asked whom they portrayed. Replied Jefferson: "They are my trinity of the three greatest men the world has ever produced—Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton and John Locke." Hamilton stood bemused for a moment, then asserted: "The greatest man that ever lived was Julius Caesar."

That, at any rate, was the way Jefferson later was fond of telling the story. If the point was that Hamilton was a would-be tyrant or dictator, it was utterly unfair. But if it was meant to illustrate the fact that beyond brilliance, Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton had absolutely nothing in common, it was perfectly to the point.

Jefferson was the son of a Virginia planter and surveyor who died when Tom was a 14-year-old; Hamilton was a West Indies–born bastard. Jefferson's inheritance was an estate of more than 2,000 acres; Hamilton got nothing. Jefferson read Cicero in Latin, Plato in Greek, Montesquieu in French; Hamilton understood finance by instinct. Jefferson stood for individual rights under a loosely knit federal system; Hamilton believed in a strong central Government. Jefferson saw America as the agrarian land of his nativity; Hamilton foresaw it as a commercial power. Both were right, but their quarrel was basic and bitter.

It was fitting in the course of human events that Thomas Jefferson became President of the nation he had done so much to bring into being. (Hamilton, under the Constitutional requirement that the President be a native-born American, was not even eligible.) His Presidency has often been accounted a disappointment; if so, it was mainly one of historical second guessing. During his first term, the Louisiana Territory was purchased; Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, at Jefferson's specific behest, opened the American frontier to the Pacific shores, and a limited war put the Barbary pirates out of business. During his second term, trying to steer clear of both Britain and Napoleonic France, Jefferson mandated an embargo on all foreign commerce by the U.S., thereby pleasing almost no one.

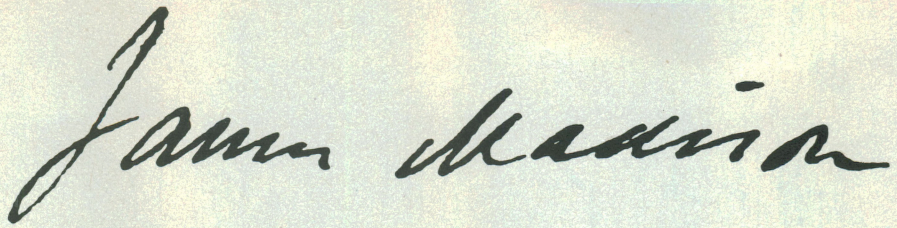
Still, he was urged to run for a third term, and could have had it. But at age 66, he opted to retire to the small mountain crowned by Monticello. One of the highest accolades to the man and his mind came from a Presidential successor, a member of the party fathered by Jefferson. President John F. Kennedy, once playing host to a group of Nobel prizewinners, described his guests as "the most extraordinary collection of talent...that has ever been gathered together at the White House—with the possible exception of when Thomas Jefferson dined alone."



Painting by Thomas Sully: In The Collection of The Corcoran Gallery, Gift of Frederick E. Church.

James Madison (1809-1817)

The truth is that all men having power ought to be mistrusted.



By tape and scale, James Madison was the puniest of American Presidents: at 5 ft. 4 in. and weighing in at about 100 pounds, he was dwarfed even by his plumply handsome wife Dolley. His lean face became wizened decades before his long life ended, thereby winning Washington Irving's description of a "withered little applejohn." Although he had a ribald wit and was an entertaining companion in private, his public speaking voice was often weak and indistinct, so that he could scarcely make himself heard. "Jemmy" Madison was for generations denied the recognition due him as the most profound and perhaps the soundest thinker among the founding fathers.

Born in 1751 at Port Conway, Va. (the place name is now but a memory), Jemmy was the eldest of ten children. His father, also James, prospered and bought more land around Montpelier, in nearby Orange County. Though at that time the sons of most leading Virginia families went to the College of William and Mary, Madison entered the College of New Jersey (now Princeton) at age 19 and graduated in 1771, but stayed on for a year studying religion and Hebrew. Religion, or more precisely freedom of religion (as a deist, he had reservations about any formal creed), became one of the two ruling passions of a relatively dispassionate life. The second was constitutional law, with good government deriving its powers from the people.

Madison was a stripling just turning 25 when he served on the committee drafting Virginia's Declaration of Rights and a new constitution for the emergent commonwealth. Religious freedom already enthralled him, and in a later remonstrance to the Virginia legislature he declared (in clearer language than was his wont): "The religion of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate."

By the acorn-oak analogy, it was an oysterseed that grew into the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Disputes between oystermen over the Potomac boundary between Virginia and Maryland and more serious disputes involving other states prompted Madison to suggest the Annapolis convention of 1786. This assembly provided the pattern and inspiration for Philadelphia a year later.

Madison's rough blueprint for the new nation was often called the Randolph Plan because Madison's fellow Virginian, Edmund Randolph, introduced it. But the underlying philosophy was unmistakably Madison's. He foresaw conflict between the concepts of separate sovereign states and of a sovereign superstate. Since he considered a monolithic nation impossible, he suggested that states have a voice in proportion to their population. He wanted to give the federal power "positive and compleat authority in all cases which require uniformity," and a veto over all state laws. He proposed a national Executive, then a novel and suspect idea, and a national Judiciary. Although by inheritance a slaveowner himself, Madison disliked slavery, and therefore opposed the provision that permitted the importation of slaves to continue up to 1808.

In the struggle for ratification of the Constitution by at least nine of the 13 states, Madison made common cause with Alexander Hamilton and the ailing John Jay in writing the pamphlets that have been collected as the *Federalist.* Madison wrote 29 (out of 85) of them, and although they are too erudite to have influenced many votes, they mark the first milestone in the history of American constitutional exposition. Madison's most dramatic achievement came in the Virginia convention of 1788. Although New Hampshire had just become the ninth state to ratify and thus put the Constitution into effect, the power of Virginia was essential to the union's success. Despite Madison's oratorical handicaps, his relentless logic prevailed against the fiery rhetoric of Patrick Henry, leader of the opposition. A husky nation was born—with Jemmy Madison as its midwife.

Denied a seat in the Senate of the new republic but elected to the House, Madison fathered the legislation setting up the first three great units of executive authority: the departments of State, War and the Treasury. Still more important, he proposed what emerged as the first ten amendments to the Constitution. To an even greater extent than he had been the "Father of the Constitution," he was the father of the Bill of Rights. In the First Amendment he coupled the right of assembly with religious freedom and freedom of the press. In 1799 he wrote: "To the press alone, chequered as it is with abuses, the world is indebted for all the triumphs, which have been gained by reason and humanity over error and oppression."

Madison gradually fell out with the Federalist and did much to launch the Jeffersonian Republican Party. He denounced the "monarchical perogative of the Executive" (Washington's 1793 declaration of neutrality) and denied a President's right to make treaties. With equal vehemence he attacked the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, which reeked with partisan totalitarianism but fortunately soon expired or were repealed.

On his accession to the Presidency, Jefferson named Madison as his Secretary of State. Diplomatic honors cannot be divided between the two because they worked so closely. On the credit side was the Louisiana Purchase (bought with funds not legally appropriated from a dictator whose right of sovereignty was dubious), and some (but unhappily exaggerated) successes against the Barbary Coast Pirates. In 1809, by a vote 122 to 47, Madison was elected President over Federalist Charles Pinckney.

Many historians have written Madison off as a weak and indecisive President. On the contrary, says Irving Brant in his definitive biography (6 volumes, 1941-61), he "led Congress and the nation," but so gently that his loose rein was scarcely felt. Madison's neutral policies toward Britain and France failed, so after years of insoluble wrangling over the intricacies of admiralty law and blockade, he persuaded Congress to declare war against Britain in June 1812. But Congress had armed the nation for war with words, not cannons, and the first two years of hostilities were disastrous. For the U.S. only a few brilliant and now legendary naval successes kept the republic's hopes alive. For final insult, the British sacked Washington and burned the White House. There Dolley Madison, whom Madison had married when he was 44, showed her mettle by saving a Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington. Her husband, as Commander in Chief of the armed forces, was at Bladensburg to share his army's ignominious defeat.

Much that followed was inevitably anticlimactic. Even in temporary quarters, the gracious Dolley Madison set an example for social and diplomatic entertaining that few of her successors have been able to emulate. Out of office in 1817, Madison retired to Montpelier.

Much of Madison's political activity was based upon his belief that all men having power ought to be mistrusted. But James Madison, both in and out of power, belied his own apothegm: he could always be trusted. Throughout the interminable sessions of the Constitutional Convention he kept a trustworthy and remarkably impartial chronicle of the proceedings. Four years after his death these records, which Dolley Madison was forced to sell to the Government for a mere $30,000, were published. It is upon Madison's punctilious notes that most of today's detailed knowledge of the birthing of the nation is based.

Painting by Samuel F. B. Morse. White House Collection

James Monroe (1817-1825)

The American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintained, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.
—From the Monroe Doctrine

James Monroe

James Monroe inspired modest adjectives. Washington, in whose army he became a major at 19, called him "a brave, active and sensible officer." When he won and wed New York Society Belle Elizabeth Kortright, an observer described him as "respectable looking." In the fevered days immediately before the War of 1812, the British Minister could still find in Secretary of State Monroe "a very mild, moderate man." Even the soaring prose of Monroe's friend, mentor and hero, Thomas Jefferson, fell short of superlatives. "He is," wrote Jefferson, doing his best, "a man whose soul might be turned wrong side outwards without discovering a blemish to the world."

Yet despite his lack of dash or dazzle, James Monroe always seemed to be where the action was.

Son of a carpenter-farmer in Virginia's Northern Neck, the shy, gangling 16-year-old just happened to be newly enrolled at the College of William and Mary at the very time in 1774 when Burgesses, locked out of their capitol by the Royal Governor, were brewing Revolution in nearby Raleigh Tavern. When the students took arms, Monroe was among the first. He crossed the Delaware with Washington (surely an American credential at least equal to coming over on the *Mayflower*), was wounded leading a charge against the Hessian arsenal in Trenton, fought at Brandywine, Germantown and Monmouth, suffered at Valley Forge. When the war moved south, Monroe returned to Virginia where—by another of those history-making circumstances that seemed to attend him—the Governor not only had an opening for an aide-de-camp but was also available to instruct him in the law.

The Governor was Thomas Jefferson. Thus began a relationship between Monroe and Jefferson which lasted so long as they both did live. And thus ere long did James Monroe, with Jefferson and James Madison, form a republican triumvirate that shaped a nation's destiny and gave substance to the rights of man. Though Monroe was the junior member by age (Jefferson was 15 years older, Madison seven), intellect and order of public preferment, he served as the steady, reliable field officer, providing political intelligence and directing tactics from the Virginia Assembly, the Continental Congress, the U.S. Senate and the Virginia Governor's seat.

Successful at home as a politician, he was an embarrassment abroad as a diplomat. Sent to revolutionary France at a time when Washington was steering a neutral course between the country and France, Monroe got carried away by his republican ardor, hailed France as "our ally and our friend," saluted "the fortitude, magnanimity and heroic valor of her troops." He was later recalled in political disgrace.*

In 1803 Jefferson, now President, gave Monroe a chance to redeem himself abroad: he sent Monroe to Paris to try to buy New Orleans and the Floridas. But only one day before Monroe's arrival, Napoleon, feeling his empire overextended, astonished U.S. Minister Robert Livingston by offering the whole of the Louisiana Territory. Monroe helped complete the deal, but he lost sight of one thing: he had been instructed to negotiate for the Floridas, and in failing to pursue that purpose, he left open a continental sore that was not healed for another 16 years—under his own Presidency.

When Madison's turn came as President, the War of 1812 was fast approaching, and he soon had need of his old friend in Washington: he appointed Monroe Secretary of State—and, before long, Secretary of War as well. And when British troops approached Washington on the raid that ended in the burning of the White House, there, in the forefront of the fighting, was Secretary Monroe. President Madison also appeared briefly with the troops, but departed in some disarray, making a laughingstock of himself—while Monroe took on new stature as a hero. In 1816 he was elected President with little opposition.

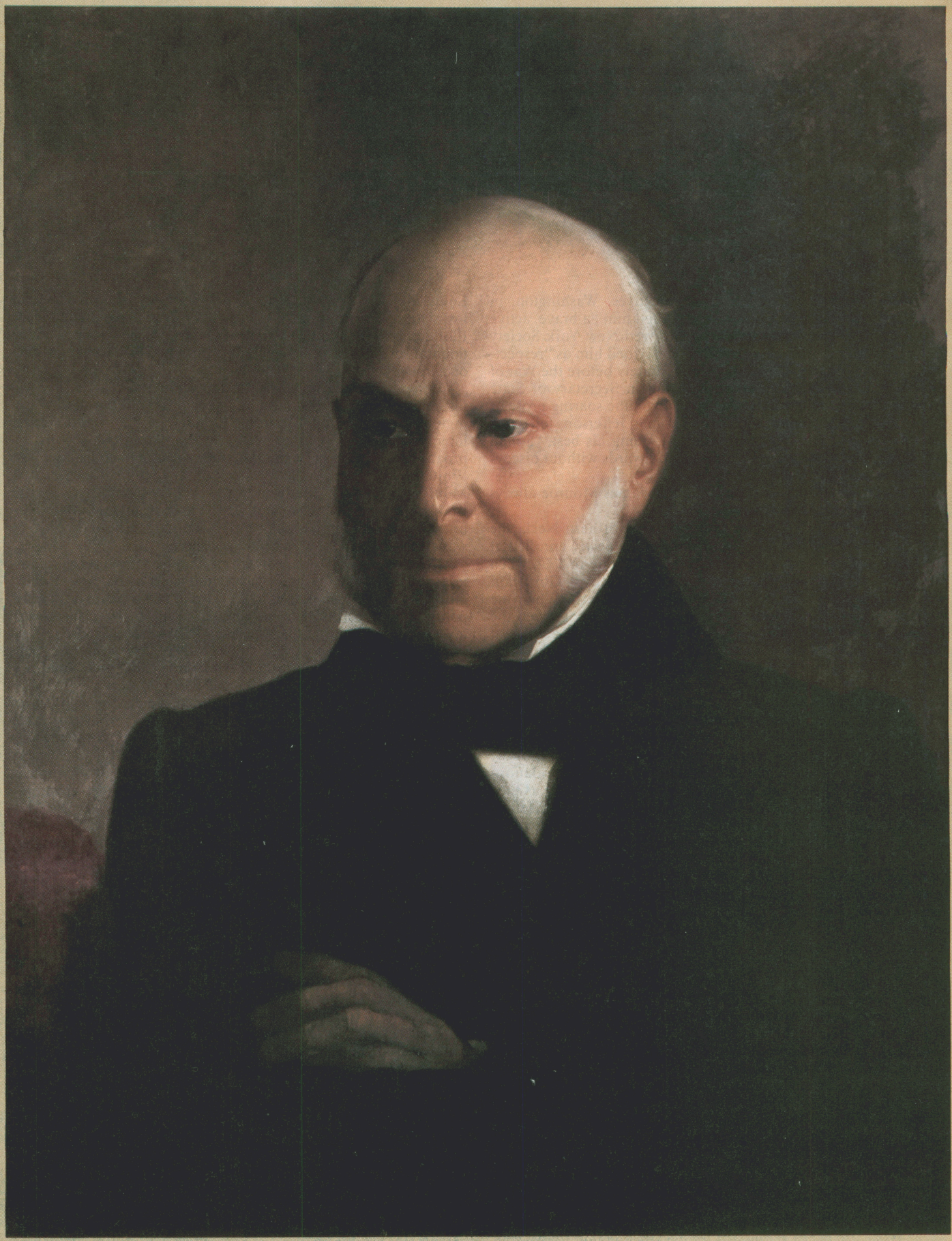
No sooner was Monroe sworn in than he set out on a trip, ostensibly to inspect military posts and coastal defenses, which lasted 3½ months, took him to 13 states and became a triumphal political tour. Before then, no one had quite realized the almost mystical attraction that the American President had come to hold for the the American people. Now, with crowds gathering, bells ringing and cannon booming, the lesson became clear—and it is remembered to this day.

ERA OF GOOD FEELINGS headlined the Boston *Centinel* of Monroe's visit there. And, for Monroe, it was: he was re-elected in 1820 with only one electoral vote cast against him (the dissenting elector explained that he did not wish anyone to break Washington's record of unanimous re-election). He was not an activist President: he stood helplessly by during the economic panic of 1819, and he was passive in the struggle over the Missouri Compromise, which implanted the seeds of Civil War.

But the U.S. today has from James Monroe a unique inheritance. By 1823, South American revolutionists had mostly cast off Spain's decrepit hand, but there were indications that Spain, with France's help, would attempt to regain its lost lands. British Foreign Minister George Canning, eager to frustrate French policy, suggested that Britain and the U.S. join in support of the Latin countries. Monroe, as always, consulted his triumviral colleagues, Jefferson and Madison, who urged acceptance of Canning's proposal. But Monroe's remarkable Secretary of State, John Quincy Adams, argued for a unilateral policy announcement, insisting that it would be undignified for the U.S. "to come in as a cockboat in the wake of the British man-of-war." And Monroe had the uncommon good sense to accept that advice, drawing his words from an Adams state paper and delivering them to Congress on Dec. 2, 1823 to enunciate the Monroe Doctrine—most recently invoked by President John F. Kennedy during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

James Monroe left office almost as popular as when he entered it. He was a hard man to dislike. But he was easy enough to forget, and he lived out his life in near poverty, trying to obtain from a neglectful Congress restitution for money he had spent as a U.S. envoy. His final days were spent with his daughter in New York, where neighborhood children saw him as a kindly old gentleman still wearing the velvet knee breeches and buckled shoes of a bygone day. He died in 1831—like Jefferson and John Adams five years before him, on the Fourth of July.

**Monroe later published a defense of his conduct, in which he criticized Washington, who had a weak forgivery. In December 1799, Washington, returning home on a snowy night, was told that Monroe had been elected Governor of Virginia. Washington sat down in his wet clothes, angrily discussing the news. Later that night he suffered chills and entered into his fatal illness.*



Painting by B. A. Gilbert: U.S. Dept. of State

John Quincy Adams (1825-1829)

What can I, upon the verge of my seventy-fourth birthday, with a shaking hand, a darkening eye, a drowsy brain, and with all my faculties dropping from me one by one, as the teeth are dropping from my head—what can I do for the cause of God and man?

John Quincy Adams.

In the winter of Revolution, John Adams wrote his wife Abigail about the education of their ten-year-old son, John Quincy: the boy should read history with an eye toward the treachery, perfidy, cruelty and hypocrisy of the world in which he was to live. John Quincy Adams dwelt with that acid view until his death at 80—even while serving his world and its inhabitants in a public career without parallel.

He was of unprepossessing appearance—5 ft. 7 in., podgy, bald throughout most of his adult life, with watery eyes and a small mouth of peevish set. He was also of disagreeable disposition; he hated and was hated by most of his leading contemporaries. Thomas Paine was "a filthy beast." Henry Clay suffered from "an undigested system of ethics." Andrew Jackson was "an adjudicated adulterer." Daniel Webster was of "gigantic intellect, envious temper, ravenous ambition and rotten heart." A few squiggles in Adams' colossal diary condemned two House colleagues to lasting obloquy: "Drumgoole; drunk with whisky, and Bynum, drunk with slavery."

Unloving, he was unloved, which gave him ample cause for wallowing in self-pity. "And friendship!" he wrote. "What friendship have I ever found but it has been disgraced by misconduct or betrayed by sordid interests?"

And yet—and yet he was a man to admire. He was honest to a fault and he was courageous in heroic measure. Though he did not like men, he loved mankind. He was a patriot born of patriots, and in his ardent effort for his country he earned title as a founder of American foreign policy. Though it cost him dearly, he stood—and fought—on principle, aloof from political party or faction. "My sense of duty," he wrote, "shall never yield to the pleasures of party."

For nearly three-quarters of a century, John Quincy Adams walked hand in hand with history. At seven, on a knoll not far from his Braintree, Mass., birthplace, he stood with his mother and was witness to the Battle of Bunker Hill. At 14, he was secretary to the American envoy in the court of Russia's Catherine II. ("There is nobody here but Slaves and Princes," he complained.) On his 28th birthday, Adams was named Minister Resident to The Hague, where he witnessed the fall of the once glorious Dutch Republic and won encomium from George Washington as "the most valuable public character we have abroad." At 30, he became Minister to Prussia, where his prickly patriotism was outraged by the greeting from a guardsman: "Who are the United States?" At 42, he arrived in Russia as Minister Plenipotentiary and, even as Napoleon's legions surged toward Moscow, John Quincy Adams and Czar Alexander I strolled along the quays of the Neva, discussing the efficacy of winter flannels (Adams wore them; the Czar did not). At 47, he was head of the American Mission at Ghent and, amid constant bickering with his fellow commissioners, including Henry Clay ("Mr. Adams in a very bad temper," noted an observer. "Mr. Clay annoys him."), he fought with customary ferocity to negotiate an honorable end to the War of 1812. And, after a stint at the court of St. James's, he became, at 50, Secretary of State—perhaps the finest the U.S. has ever had—under President Monroe. If Monroe held top responsibility and deserves credit for the enduring Doctrine, John Quincy Adams was nonetheless both the letter and the spirit behind it.

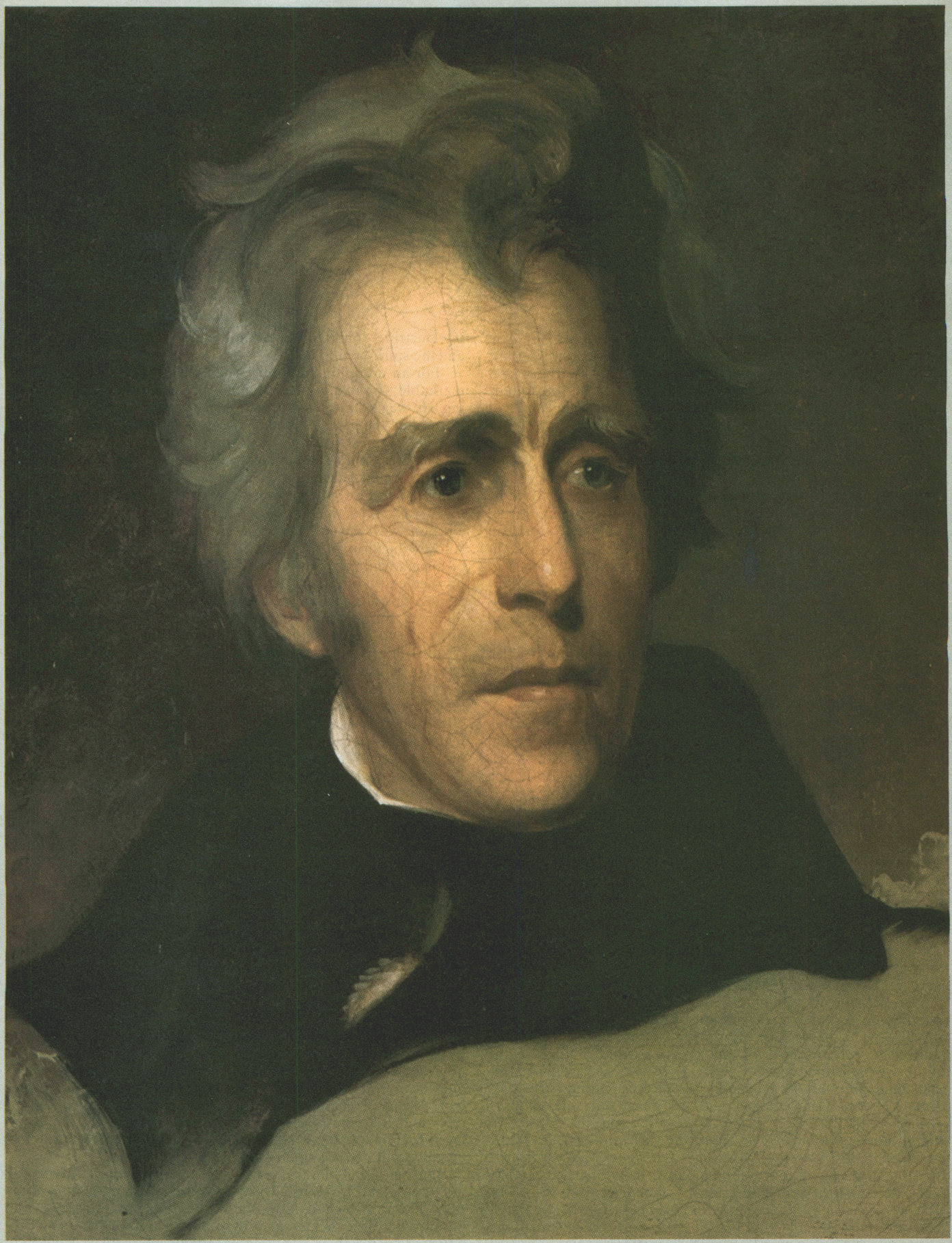
For an undiplomatic man, Adams' diplomatic career was remarkable; for an apolitical man, his political career was astonishing. He was a state senator, U.S. Senator (elected as a Federalist, he became the party's bitterest enemy), President of the U.S. and, in his final, finest years, a U.S. Representative.

His Presidency is most mercifully described briefly. As Secretary of State, Adams was, under the then existing scheme of things, Monroe's natural successor. But the "Era of Good Feelings" was ended, and violent political faction had set in; Adams' election was thrown into the House, where he won against Andrew Jackson and William H. Crawford only with the support of his erstwhile foe, Henry Clay. Then, when he named Clay as his Secretary of State, a cry of "Corrupt bargain!" went up against this most incorruptible of men. Its decibel count did not diminish during his Administration, which amounted to four years of corrosive campaigning toward the election of 1828. Against this, Adams, the man of principle over party, was helpless. He refused, on principle, to remove officeholders including Cabinet members, who were openly disloyal to him; he declined, on principle, to veto partisan legislation from a hostile Congress. His Administration accomplished little, and he was easily defeated for re-election by Jackson. His diary entry was reflective of his character: "The sun of my political life sets in deepest gloom. But that of my country shines unclouded."

He was wrong; his sun was far from set. In 1830, to his great surprise and almost childish pleasure, his family's old constituency sent him to the House. It was there that he fought his grimmest, most gallant battle—and as always, he stood alone on principles peculiarly his own.

Adams abhorred slavery, but argued that the Constitution countenanced it; he thereby earned abolitionist enmity. But the House, dominated by slaveholding interests, adopted a "gag rule" against all petitions even mentioning slavery—and Adams based his grand fight on the constitutional Right of Petition, thereby attracting Southern fury. Week after week, session after session, he presented petitions—most of them anti-slavery but, because of his insistence that citizens have a right to petition for any cause, even one that called for dissolution of the Union—and the House refused to consider them. Twice, moves were made to bring Adams to the bar of the House for censure. He asked no quarter. "I see where the shoe pinches!" he cried in his querulous old voice. "Mr. Speaker, it will pinch more yet." Finally, after eight years of ceaseless struggle, the House rescinded its gag rule—and John Quincy Adams, who had preserved for his country and its people the Right of Petition, murmured, "Blessed, forever blessed, be the name of God."

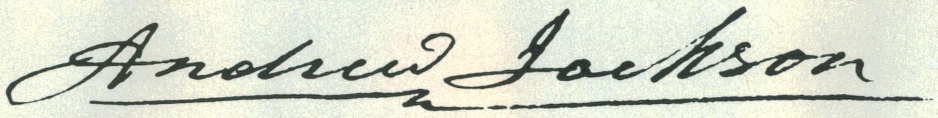
On Feb. 21, 1848, former President John Quincy Adams fell into a coma at his House desk, recovering once enough to whisper, "This is the last of earth, I am content." Perhaps he was—and perhaps not. In either event, a more fitting epitaph had been pronounced years before by a political enemy who said, in a moment of extreme exasperation: "Surely that is the most extraordinary man on God's footstool."



Painting by Thomas Sully. National Gallery of Art, Washington. Andrew Mellon Collection

Andrew Jackson (1829-1837)

I care nothing about clamours, Sir, mark me!
I do precisely what I think is right and just.



Commandingly tall, erect, dressed in deepest black, his sharp-edged face topped by a proud sweep of white hair, General Andrew Jackson walked to his Inauguration. From the moment he left his lodgings in Gadsby's Tavern, his admirers crowded upon him, perching on rooftops and packing sidewalks for a glimpse of him. Then they followed him to the White House, where they stormed the buffet tables, stood on tables and chairs to cheer him. Supreme Court Justice Joseph Story glumly observed, "The reign of King Mob seemed triumphant."

Andrew Jackson! No hawk among the dovecotes ever ruffled more feathers. Virginia's plantation owners, New York and Philadelphia money men, New England's merchants and manufacturers feared him as uncouth, a threatening despot, a militant Caesar. In fact, Jackson's early life had been as rough as his detractors imagined. He was born to Irish immigrant parents in a frontier settlement on the border between North and South Carolina. His father died before he was born, rupturing himself lifting a heavy log; his mother died of the plague when he was only 14. Two older brothers died in the American Revolution; he himself served as a courier, was captured, and slashed across arm and head by a British officer whose boots he refused to clean. Indomitable, he was also ambitious. He read law in North Carolina, was admitted to the bar at 20. A patron of his, appointed judge for the Nashville area, took Jackson along as public prosecutor.

In Nashville, where the houses were still built as blockhouses against Indian attacks, Jackson speculated in land and in slaves, opened a series of trading stores, became a plantation owner—and set a local record for duels. Most frequently at issue was his wife's honor. Rachel was the daughter of the boardinghouse keeper where he first took up lodgings. The voluptuous young woman left her first husband; subsequently, he, got permission from the Virginia legislature to sue for divorce. Jackson promptly married the girl, only to discover two years later that the actual decree had only then been made final by the court. Totally embarrassed, Jackson remarried her. But from then on, his enemies made leering allusions to his "paramour." The most dramatic duel was with one Charles Dickinson, whose bullet Jackson took full in the chest. He staggered and sagged, but straightened up to shoot Dickinson in the groin. Dickinson died a slow, painful death. Jackson carried Dickinson's bullet, lodged so close to his heart that it could not be removed, for the rest of his life. In another fracas, Jackson went after Thomas Hart Benton with a horsewhip, and got two bullets in his shoulder for his pains. But being a duelist was not a political handicap, and Jackson was elected to the House of Representatives and twice to the Senate, where he was always treated as the outsider he was.

The War of 1812 made this rough-and-tumble character from the West a national figure. As a major general of militia, he mounted a campaign against the Creek Indians that resulted in their total defeat. He was, his men had said, "tough as hickory"—and Old Hickory he became. And when the British threatened New Orleans, it was Old Hickory who gave the infant nation its greatest victory (ironically, it was fought two weeks after the peace treaty was signed in Ghent, Belgium).

So the new nation rejoiced in a new hero—and, after some high-spirited military campaigning in Florida, he was urged by admirers to run for President. In 1824 he did, but was defeated by John Quincy Adams. In 1828 the election was more on personality than issues, and poor Rachel once again was attacked as an adulteress. She suffered a nervous breakdown and died of a heart attack before the Inauguration. "May God Almighty forgive her murderers, as I know she forgave them. I never can," the wounded old lion roared at her funeral.

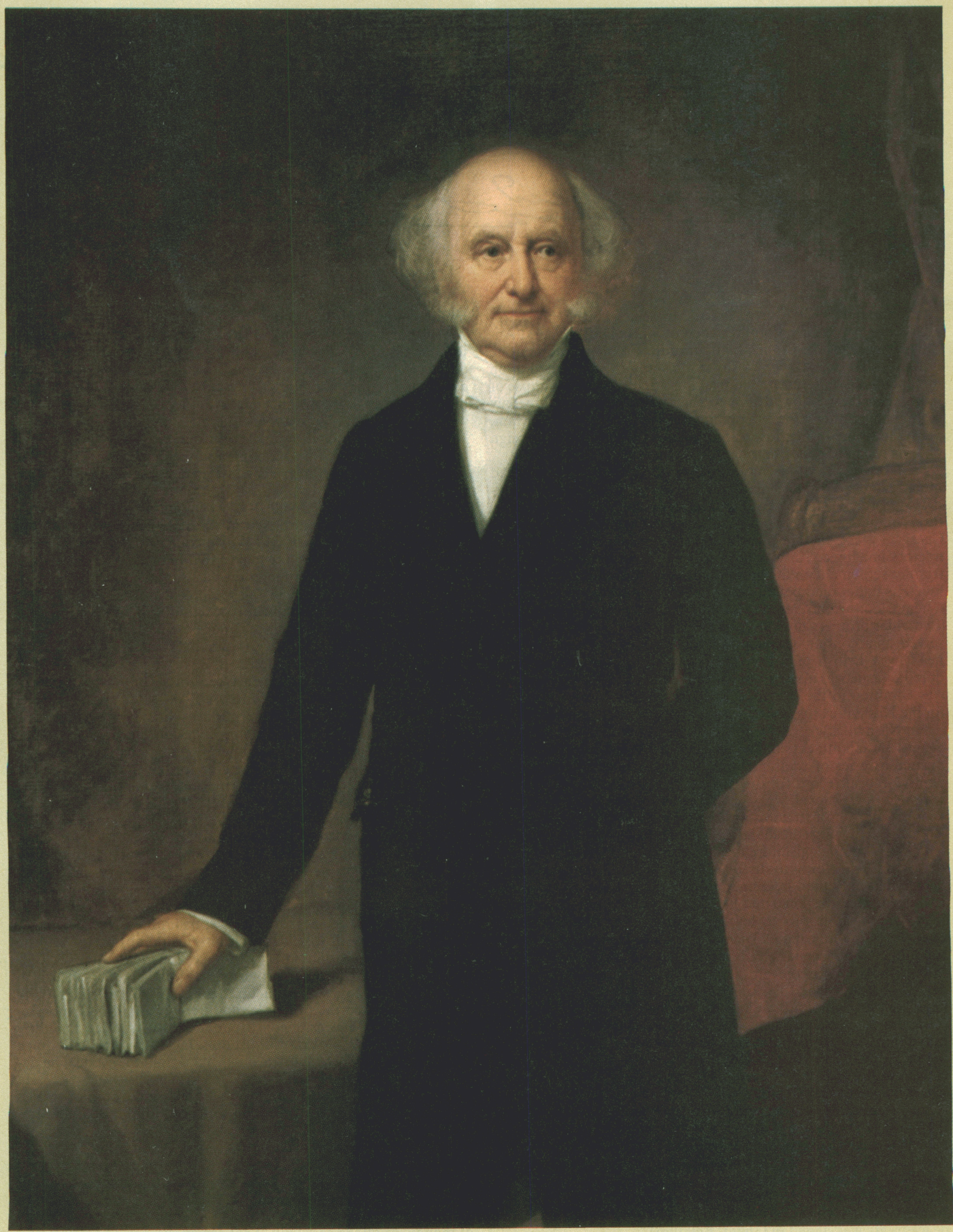
And so, at 61, Andrew Jackson came to Washington, a man with a chronic cough and a nagging dysentery, with a shattered shoulder and a bullet near his heart, in deepest mourning for his slandered wife.

Jackson confounded nearly everyone in his conduct as President. His critics were surprised to find him in public a man of mild temper, possessed of Old World courtesy. His sympathizers were sometimes taken aback to find that in private he chewed his tobacco with the uninhibited enthusiasm of a frontiersman, spitting into a cuspidor even in the middle of official business. He shrewdly used his reputation for irascibility to simulate rage to forestall a predictable harangue from some protesting committee, only to say with glee after the group had left, "They thought I was mad." He was willing to listen to the varying viewpoints of his Cabinet members, but he never asked for a vote. "I always take the responsibility of deciding for myself," he said.

Jackson began his Administration by briskly replacing some 10% of federal officeholders. Some called it "the spoils system," but Jackson insisted that it was merely a demonstration that the bureaucracy was no longer "an engine for the support of the few at the expense of the many." He made this doctrine even more explicit in his battles against the Bank of the United States, which Jackson saw as a tool of the rich. He vetoed the renewal of the bank's charter and laid out his creed to Congress: "When the law undertakes...to make the rich richer and the potent more powerful, the humbler members of society—the farmers, mechanics, and laborers—have a right to complain..." In the campaign of 1832, Jackson made the issue a personal one: "No bank and Jackson—or bank and no Jackson." He was triumphantly re-elected.

He acted with the same high-riding authority in the Nullification crisis. Jackson's own Vice President, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, protesting against high tariffs which made New England's manufactured goods more expensive to the South, enunciated the principle that if any state of the Union regarded a federal law as unconstitutional, it was entitled to nullify it. In 1832 South Carolina did just that. Jackson's reply was quick and unequivocal. "No state or states has a right to secede," he declared. "Nullification therefore means insurrection and war." He ordered a man-of-war to Charleston Harbor, got Congress to pass a bill authorizing him to use federal force. South Carolina dithered, then capitulated.

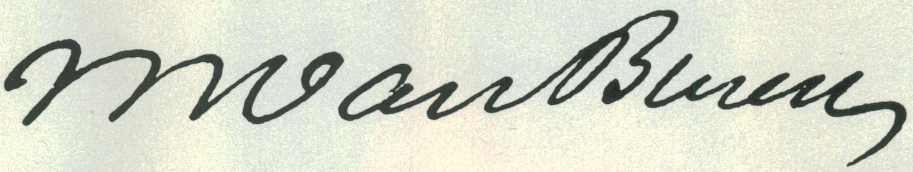
Andrew Jackson. A complicated man. An inspiring man. An intimidating man. And admittedly a fallible man. But a man who used his own fierce self-confidence to assert that the President of the United States represented the cause of the great, common majority of U.S. citizens against any interest whatever—whether of money, privilege or region. That argument is still going on. But with Andrew Jackson, the U.S. Presidency took on a new dimension and direction.



Painting by G. P. A. Healy: White House Collection

Martin Van Buren (1837-1841)

Whatever weaknesses I may be subject to—and doubtless they are numerous—dogmatism, I am very sure, is not one of them.



"The Little Magician," "The Red Fox of Kinderhook," "The American Talleyrand"—though barbed, all these nicknames were admiring of Martin Van Buren's consummate political skills. He bent men to his purposes, maneuvered issues, forged unity out of conflict, and generally succeeded in keeping political enemies as personal friends. And if in the end he proved that a great politician does not necessarily make a great President, he accepted bitter defeat in perfect character—with a smile, a bow, and a shake of his victorious opponent's hand.

His father's tavern in the small Dutch village of Kinderhook, N.Y., was a convenient stopping place for politicians—among them Aaron Burr, Alexander Hamilton and John Jay—traveling the Post Road between New York and Albany, and young Martin met them all. When he was 14, he was given a job as clerk by a leading local lawyer, and at 20 he set up on his own. He acquired a reputation for painstaking preparation of briefs, mastery of detail, and a quiet persuasiveness of manner. By the time he was 40, he was comfortably wealthy and his prestige as a lawyer unchallengeable. Even John Quincy Adams once declared him the best-qualified man in the country to be Chief Justice of the U.S.

He had learned law, but he was born to politics. Presiding over a local caucus, he showed a genius for tactfully compromising differences. At 29 he was elected a state senator and began building the "Albany Regency," a tight organization of top politicians who pioneered the patronage system, swapping jobs for votes. Remembering his tavern days, Van Buren extended organization down to local levels, providing a model for present party systems. In 1821 the Regency obligingly sent him to Washington as a Senator.

He was 38, with curly yellow hair turning to red in sideburns that swept down to his chin, the clothes of a dandy, and standing as tall as his 5 ft. 6 in. stature would permit. In Washington, his mild voice was little heard amidst the thundering oratory of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay. Instead he devoted himself to the wheeling and dealing of political management, with such success that John C. Calhoun declared in exasperation: "He is not...of the race of the lion or of the tiger; he belongs to a lower order—the fox." Said John Randolph of Roanoke, the most venomous speaker of his (or any other) day: "He rowed to his object with muffled oars." Outside the Senate, he worked to organize the 1828 election of Andrew Jackson. A man of enormous personal charm, he wooed the Southerners in particular, with a months-long tour that took him as far as Georgia. One result: the unlikely alliance between the industrial North and the agrarian South which forms the basis of the modern Democratic Party. Another: Jackson's landslide victory.

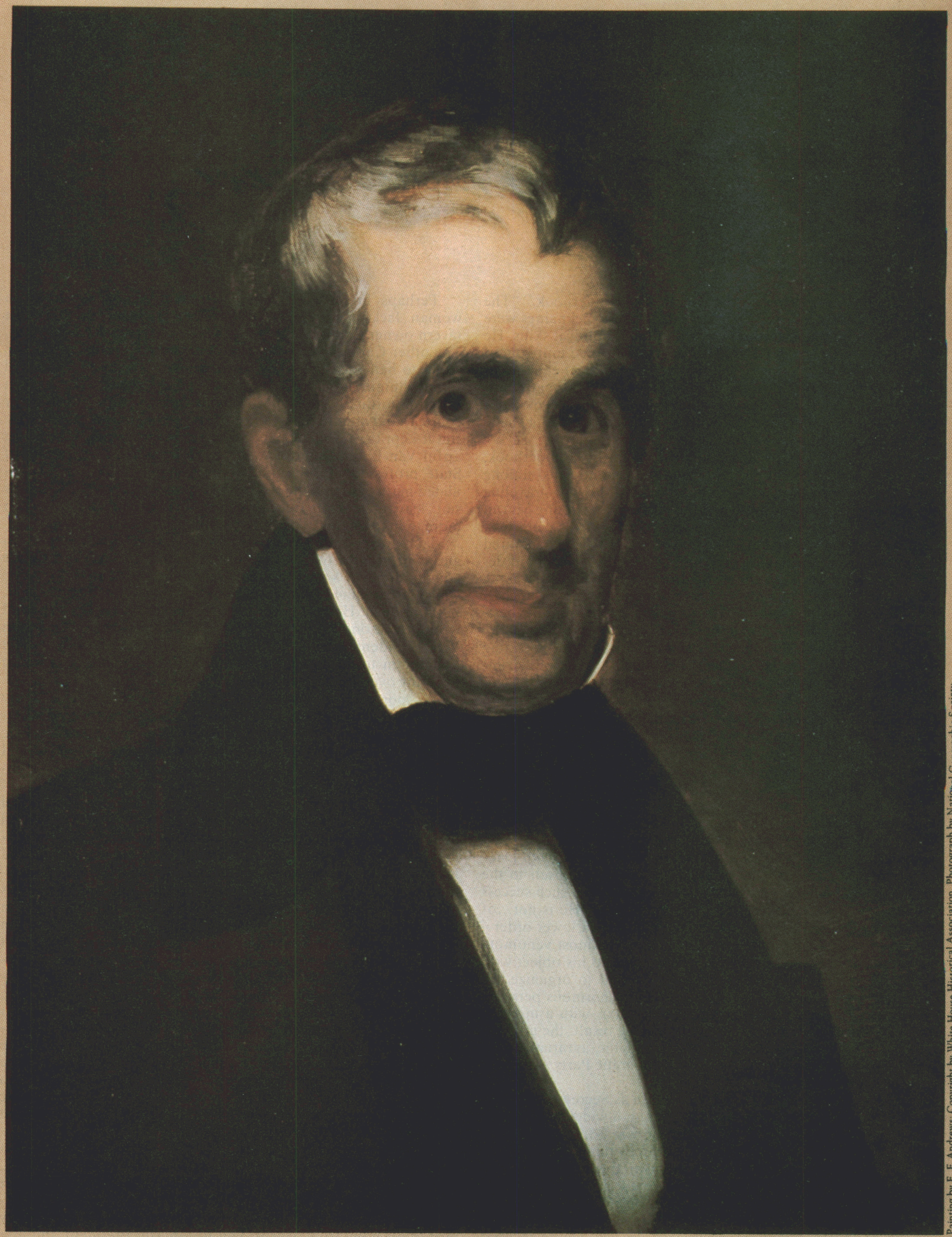
Jackson immediately named Van Buren as Secretary of State, but he became much more than that. Being a widower (his wife was a home-town girl who died when he was 36, but figured so little in his life that Van Buren did not even mention her in his autobiography), he could make himself available to the President any time day or night. Evenings, he often dropped in unannounced; afternoons, he joined Jackson on his daily horseback rides, which ranged far into the countryside. His counsel was usually on the side of caution: when Jackson was raging to send troops to South Carolina in the Nullification crisis, it was Van Buren who urged restraint.

Perhaps his subtlest maneuver involved, of all things, a woman. Jackson's Secretary of War John H. Eaton had married a tavern owner's bosomy daughter whose reputation was dubious. The other Cabinet wives snubbed her brutally, refusing even to speak to her. Jackson, whose own beloved Rachel had endured similar humiliations, was outraged, and the suave widower Van Buren accordingly took special pains to show Mrs. Eaton every courtesy and attention. An affair of staggering triviality? Perhaps. But it kept the Cabinet at loggerheads for two years. Finally the artful Van Buren found a solution. He resigned as Secretary of State, professedly for the good of the Administration, and manipulated matters so that the rest of the Cabinet felt obliged to follow suit, leaving Jackson free to reconstitute his Cabinet with men more to his own (and Van Buren's) liking.

Jackson appointed Van Buren minister to Britain, but the Senate, after months of delay, refused to confirm. With the Senate equally divided, Vice President Calhoun cast the deciding vote, which he explained with vindictive glee, "It will kill him dead, sir, kill him dead. He will never kick, sir, never kick." He was dead wrong. Jackson, infuriated, chose Van Buren as his second-term Vice President. And in 1837, Jackson rode with President-elect Van Buren to his Inauguration, the tall, commanding presence towering over the dapper little man at his side.

As soon as he became President, Van Buren was afflicted by problems not all of his own making. Owing partly to policies begun under Jackson, the U.S. was struck by the financial panic of 1837. There were flour riots in New York, banks collapsed and the poorhouses were filled all over the country. Van Buren stubbornly insisted on a hard-money policy, refusing to rescind Jackson's Specie Circular, which required that the purchase of all Government land must be made in gold or silver. He alienated bankers by proposing the establishment of an independent treasury, but could not get it approved until 1840. He was denounced for his refusal to resort to paper money. He was plagued by abolitionists urging him to act against slavery; though Van Buren was opposed to the spread of slavery, he refused to interfere with it in the states where it already existed. When a rebellion broke out in Canada in 1837, Van Buren was embarrassed by the open support and sympathy offered the Canadians by some Americans, particularly when British minions sank a small U.S. vessel, the *Caroline*, which had been ferrying supplies across the Niagara River. He sent General Winfield Scott to patrol the border and maintain strict neutrality, thus preserving peace with Britain but antagonizing many of the Canadians' American sympathizers. On the more positive side, Van Buren ordered—in what was one of the first Presidential efforts to regulate working conditions—that no person should labor more than ten hours a day on federal public works. For that, an early labor advocate wrote, "his name ought to be recorded in every workingman's heart."

In the tumultuous 1840 election, Van Buren did not stand a chance. The Whigs called him Martin Van Ruin, chanted "Van, Van, he's a used-up man," and elected old General William Henry Harrison, the homespun hero of Tippecanoe. Before Harrison moved into the White House, he received a congratulatory visit in his hotel from Martin Van Buren, still President. In those rough-and-tumble political days, it was not a usual thing to do. But Martin Van Buren had political class.



Painting by E. F. Andrews. Copyright by White House Historical Association. Photograph by National Geographic Society

William Henry Harrison (March 4 - April 4, 1841)

Some folks are silly enough to have formed a plan to make a President of the United States out of this Clerk and Clodhopper.

W H Harrison

For a man who brushed history lightly, William Henry Harrison holds a notable assortment of Presidential records. His 1840 campaign was the first to employ such modern hoopla as slogans, songs, symbols and parades on a grand scale. Harrison was the first to draw more than a million votes (1,275,017 to Martin Van Buren's losing 1,128,720). He was the first Whig President. He was the oldest (68) to be sworn in. He delivered the longest inaugural address (one hour and 40 minutes). He served the shortest term (a month to the day). He had more grandchildren (48, including Benjamin Harrison, the 23rd President) and great-grandchildren (106) than any other President. And he was the first to die in office.

But there was one thing William Henry Harrison was not, despite strenuous and successful efforts by his campaign managers to create the image: he was not a child from a frontier log cabin.

Far from it. He was born in a three-story brick mansion at Berkeley Plantation on the James River, son of a signer of the Declaration of Independence who later became a Virginia Governor. William Henry started to study medicine but decided to try soldiering instead; he enlisted in the U.S. Infantry and departed for the Ohio Territory, carrying with him a book of rhetoric and his Cicero. He fought Indians under Mad Anthony Wayne—and, though there was later much dispute about Harrison's claims to military greatness, there was never the slightest question about the personal courage of this small, sallow man with the pointed nose. He fell in love with Anna Symmes, daughter of a judge, and when the father snubbed Harrison's suit, the young couple got married anyway. Later the irate father asked the classic question: "How do you expect to support my daughter?" Replied Lieutenant Harrison: "My sword is my means of support, Sir."

His sword (or its reputation) was to support him off and on for much of his life—but not for now. In 1798 he resigned from the Army, settling into a five-room log cabin (hence the log cabin legend), but to accommodate a growing family—the Harrisons had ten children—the cabin was covered with clapboard and expanded to 16 rooms with the addition of two spacious wings. He farmed a bit and turned his attention to politics, being elected territorial delegate to Congress in 1799 by a less-than-landslide vote of eleven to ten. The next year, President Adams appointed William Henry Harrison governor of the Indian Territory. Adams' successor, Thomas Jefferson, gave Harrison orders to acquire for the Federal Government as much Indian land as possible.

Harrison followed his instructions to the letter, and then some. Often "mellowing"—as he euphemistically put it—the chiefs with whisky, he gathered up vast tracts including, after the Treaty of Fort Wayne in 1809, almost three million acres from the Miami tribe. The cost was negligible: $7,000 and a small annuity. Tecumseh (Shooting Star), the great Shawnee leader, absent during the negotiations, was enraged. "Sell a country?" he asked at a dramatic powwow with Harrison. "Why not sell the air, the clouds and the great sea as well as the earth?" The session ended with Tecumseh's men and Harrison threatening each other, the Indians with their tomahawks raised, the intrepid Harrison with his sword drawn—a scene which later made for splendid campaign propaganda.

Tecumseh and his one-eyed brother, Tenskawatawa, known as "The Prophet," took to the warpath—and William Henry Harrison was at last on the road that led to the White House. On Nov. 6, 1811, again taking advantage of Tecumseh's absence, Harrison moved 1,000 militiamen against "Prophet's Town" at the confluence of the Wabash and Tippecanoe rivers. The Prophet urged his braves to strike first, exhorting them to attack by saying that the white man's bullets would turn to sand. They didn't. The battle of Tippecanoe gave the U.S. a heady victory and Harrison a hoard of political capital. But a final showdown with Tecumseh remained: during the War of 1812, with Brigadier General Harrison as supreme commander in the Northwest, American forces defeated the Indians, now joined with the British, at the battle of the Thames in Canada. Tecumseh was killed and the Indians left the war for good.

There were laurels aplenty, and Harrison gathered them up as best he could, serving without distinction in the Ohio senate, the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate and, briefly, as Minister to Colombia (he took with him a packet of garden seeds from the banks of the Ohio and even today is credited with having introduced such vegetables as celery, turnips and radishes to Colombia). He even ran unsuccessfully as one of three Whig candidates for President in 1836. But the glory days seemed past, and by 1840 Harrison had settled into a sinecure as court clerk in Hamilton County, Ohio. And then, from the Whigs, came the last and greatest call.

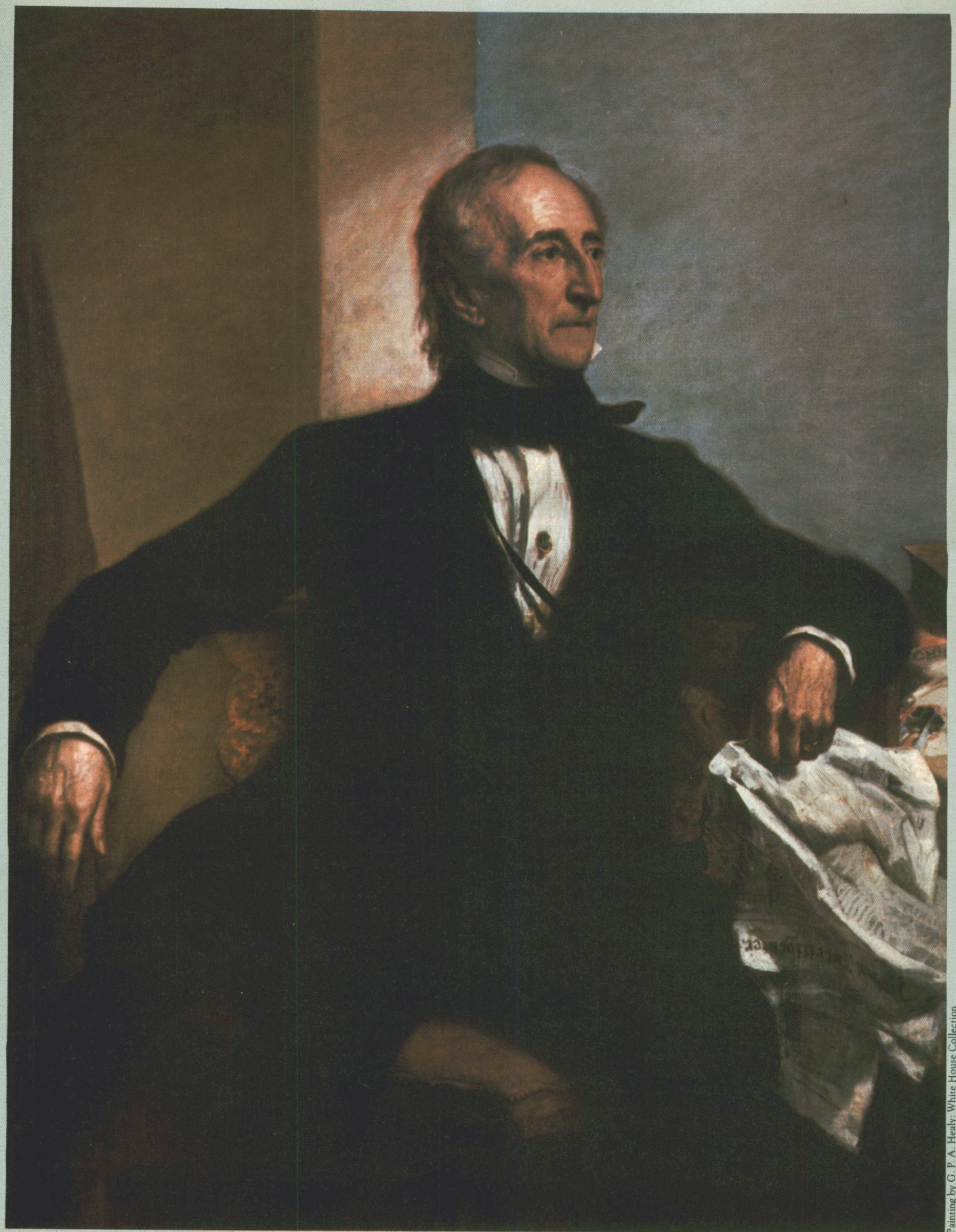
The Whigs were a hodgepodge of Federalists, Antifederalists, Masons, Antimasons, states'-rights men and abolitionists who had only one thing in common: they hated Andrew Jackson and all his works, including his hand-picked President, Martin Van Buren. But much as they opposed Jackson, they recognized his appeal—and they sought as their own candidate a military hero of the Western frontiers, preferably one without fixed political opinions that might offend any of the disparate Whig factions. William Henry Harrison fit that bill perfectly.

The campaign, one of the cleverest and most effective in U.S. political history, got its impetus when a Democratic paper sneeringly suggested that Harrison would be better off spending the rest of his life in a log cabin, chugging hard cider. Almost overnight, log cabin political headquarters sprang up everywhere and log cabin floats were paraded in the streets; cider was dispensed free at giant rallies and pious farmers went to church with canteens of cider hung around their necks. And the nation's voice arose in doggeral celebrating Harrison and his running mate, John Tyler of Virginia: "What has caused this great commotion, motion/Our country through?/It is the ball a-rolling on/For Tippecanoe and Tyler, too."

Harrison did his bit, too, discarding his tall silk hat in favor of a broad-brimmed Western one. And he steadfastly refused to get cornered on issues. When a New York stranger traveled to Ohio to find out Harrison's views on abolition, he was told: "There is no need of having any private conversation about politics. If you will stop and dine, I shall be happy to welcome you."

Victorious, he rode his favorite mount, "Old Whitey" (John Quincy Adams, ever acidulous, called it "a mean-looking white horse"), from the White House to the Capitol where, standing hatless and coatless in the cold, damp weather, he delivered his marathon address. It was all too much for the old man. On the evening of March 27, he sickened with pneumonia, and he died seven days later, saying in his final delirium: "Sir, I wish you to understand the true principles of the government. I wish them carried out. I ask nothing more."

History has supposed that the words were directed to Vice President John Tyler, who, not even knowing that Harrison was ill, was at home in Virginia at the time.



Painting by G. P. A. Healy: White House Collection

John Tyler (1841-1845)

Popularity, I have always thought, may aptly be compared to a coquette—
the more you woo her, the more apt is she to elude your embrace.

John Tyler

Still in his nightshirt and cap, his eyes heavy with slumber, the slender man with a hawk's nose answered the door of his gracious Williamsburg home at dawn on April 5, 1841, to receive the message. William Henry Harrison, ninth President of the U.S., was dead. And the sleepy homeowner, Vice President John Tyler, was now President.

Or was he?

The succession clause of the Constitution was confusing: "In case of the removal of the President from office, or of his death, resignation, or inability to discharge the powers and duties of the said office, *the same* shall devolve on the Vice President..."

"The same" what? "Powers and duties" without full and unclouded title? Or the "said office" itself? Harrison had been the first President to die in office. There was no precedent to follow. Nobody really knew the answers—nobody, that is, but John Tyler and Harrison's Secretary of State, Daniel Webster, who probably advised him and certainly supported him in his decision.

At any rate, Tyler left Williamsburg within two hours after getting the news, rode to Washington in 21 hours—and by the time he arrived there had made up his mind. He would not *act* as President. He would *be* the President. For that decision, eight later Presidents (Fillmore, Andrew Johnson, Arthur, Theodore Roosevelt, Coolidge, Truman, Lyndon Johnson and Ford), who succeeded under unusual circumstances, and the U.S. as a whole have John Tyler to thank.

A curious, contradictory character was John Tyler. In his private life, he was a lover of fine and lovely things: music (he was an accomplished violinist), poetry (he was an unaccomplished poet, but that did not keep him from trying)* and ladies. His 29-year marriage to his first wife, Letitia, who gave him eight children, was a quiet idyl; his second marriage, to Julia Gardiner, when she was 24 and he was 54 and President, was a romance to the point that Julia's younger sister felt compelled to warn her, "You spend so much time in kissing, things of more importance are left undone." As it turned out, Julia bore seven children, the last when Tyler was 70, giving her husband a Presidential paternity record of 15.

At the same time, John Tyler was of stern and unbending will in matters of political principle. Born in the same Virginia county as his running mate and Presidential predecessor, William Henry Harrison (Tyler's father and Harrison's were political rivals), Tyler was a lifelong Jeffersonian, a strict Constitutional constructionist, a states'-rights man and a deadly opponent of protective tariffs and the national bank. As a U.S. Representative and Senator, as Virginia's Governor and as President, he never departed from those beliefs. When the bill which would have authorized Andrew Jackson to use military force against South Carolina in the Nullification crisis of 1833 came before the Senate, many Southern members hated the very thought of it. Yet so fearsome was the President's power that most of the opponents managed to absent themselves when the vote came.

The final count was 32 in favor of the Force Bill—and John Tyler alone against what he later called "that bloody bill." In 1833 Senator Tyler voted to censure President Jackson on the national bank issue; three years later, he resigned from the Senate rather than follow the instructions of the Virginia assembly to reverse his censure vote. He was an obstinate man.

He was an obstinate President too. From the instant he took office, he let it be known that he would try to run things his own way—and damn the popular consequences. William Henry Harrison had promised to bring all major decisions to a Cabinet vote, with the President being one among equals. Would President Tyler continue that policy? He most certainly would not. Early on, he fell out with Senator Henry Clay, the power behind the shaky throne of the Whig Party. His note to Clay was straight and to the point. Wrote Tyler: "Go you now then, Mr. Clay, to your end of the avenue where stands the Capitol, and there perform your duty to the country as you shall think proper. So help me God, I shall do mine at this end of it as I shall think proper."

During his time in office, he vetoed ten bills—more than any one-term President before him—and became known as "Old Veto." After his second veto of a bill authorizing Henry Clay's cherished national bank, Tyler's entire Cabinet resigned, save only Secretary of State Webster. "Where am I to go, Mr. President?" asked Webster. "You must decide that for yourself," replied Tyler. "If you leave it to me," said Webster, "I will stay where I am." Thereupon President John Tyler leaped to his feet. "Give me your hand on that!" he cried. "And I will say to you that Henry Clay is a doomed man."

Because of his vetoes, a formal move toward impeachment—the first against any President—was brought in the House, charging Tyler with misuse of power. John Tyler, never a man who enjoyed being pushed around, was understandably annoyed. "The high crime of sustaining the Constitution of the country I have committed," he wrote to a friend, "and to this I plead guilty." The highly partisan move failed by a vote of 127 to 83. Tyler also was formally kicked out of the Whig Party, which bothered him very little, since he had never been much of a Whig anyway. When Tyler later was dubbed "a President without a party," his bride Julia, whom he had married two years after the death of his first wife, retorted, "If he wants a party, I will give him a party."

Despite his toils and turmoils, Tyler did manage some positive achievements. Under his Administration, Webster concluded an 1842 treaty with England which fixed the U.S.'s northeastern boundary with Canada, long a matter of contention—and occasional gunfire. And then there was Texas. Annexation of that vast land was Tyler's dearest wish, but he was frustrated by Northern fears of an extension of slavery (Webster resigned on the issue). On assurance that Democrat James K. Polk was for annexation, Tyler withdrew from competition in the 1844 election. While he was a lame duck President, Congress adopted a joint resolution offering statehood to Texas. And in the final days of his term, preparing to return to Sherwood Forest, his Virginia plantation, John Tyler signed that resolution.

When he died at 71, John Tyler, true as always to his personal beliefs, was serving as a member of the Confederate House of Representatives, reviled in the North as traitor and a lackey of secession. He might better be remembered as a savior of the Presidential succession.

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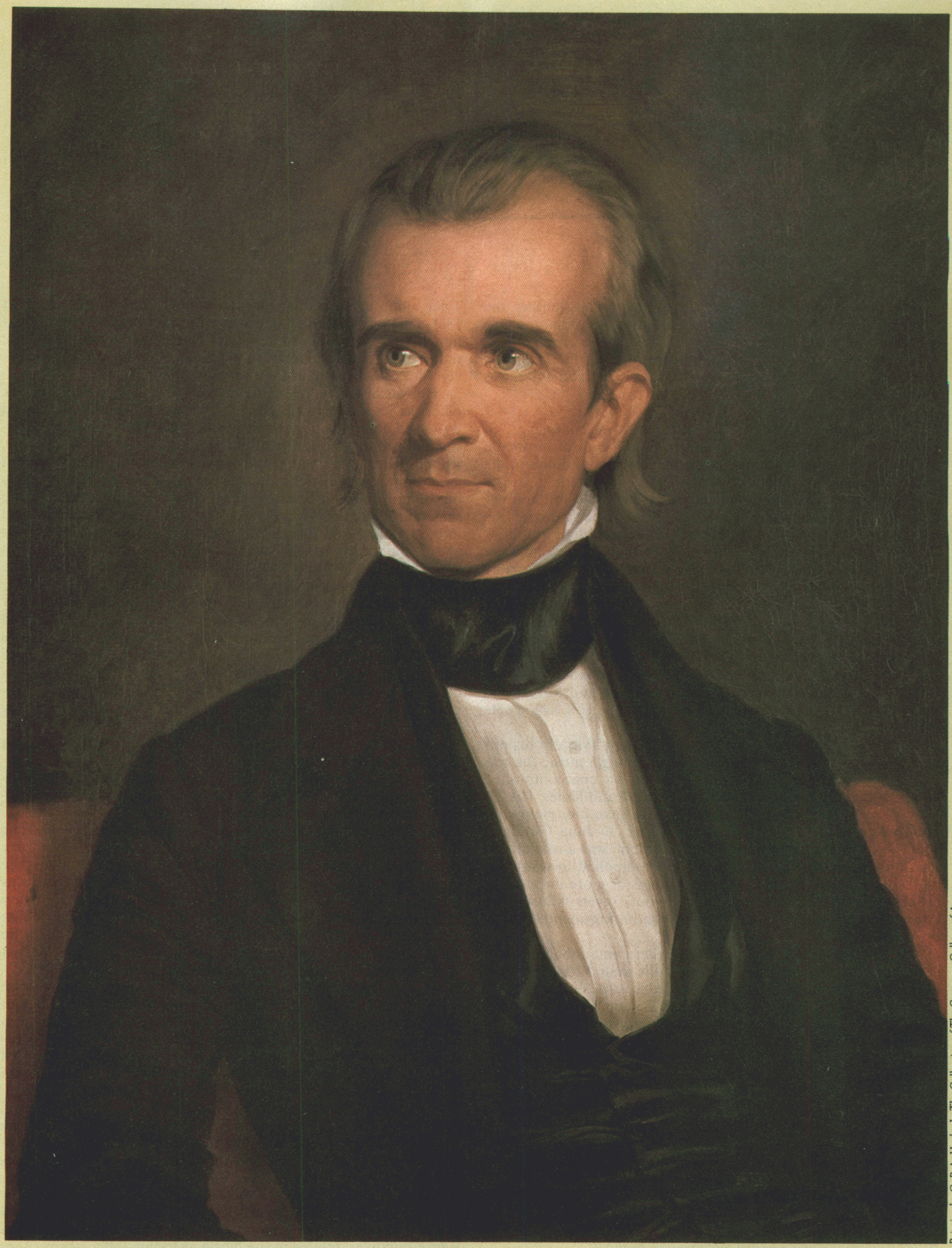
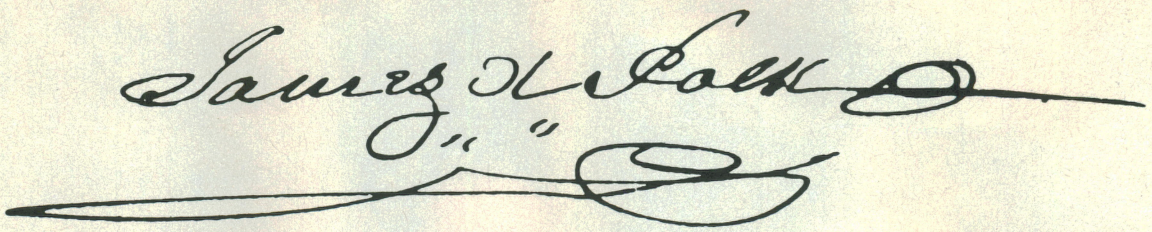
* *"Sweet lady awake, from your slumbers awake,*
Weird beings we come o'er hill and through brake
To sing you a song in the stillness of night,
Oh read you our riddle fair lady aright?"



Painting by G. P. A. Healy: In The Collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art

James K. Polk (1845-1849)

Upon each recurrence of my birthday, I am solemnly impressed with the vanity and emptiness of worldly honours.



He had cold eyes and a mouth that looked as if it had been slashed out by a used razor. He had little charm and less humor. "Who is James K. Polk?" mocked his opponents. History's answer is that he was the strongest U.S. President between Jackson and Lincoln—and that his driving Administration added more than a million square miles to the U.S., leaving it half again as large as when he entered office.

Polk was the first "dark horse" to be nominated for President. In 1844 ex-President Martin Van Buren confidently expected the Democratic nomination, just as Henry Clay expected to be nominated (and was) by the Whigs. But the question of expanding slavery into new territories—especially Texas—was rousing national passions, and Van Buren, forever playing politics, waffled: he announced that he favored delaying Texas' annexation indefinitely. Patriarch Andrew Jackson, in full sympathy with the nation's expansionist mood ("All of Texas, all of Oregon!"), quietly let it be known that he favored Polk, who supported immediate annexation. At the Democratic Convention, Van Buren led at the start, but Jacksonians blocked him from obtaining the necessary two-thirds majority. Only on the eighth ballot was Polk's name presented—and on the ninth, he won. In the general election, Clay needed only New York's 36 electoral votes to win; he lost them by 5,000 votes because an anti-slavery candidate drew away nearly 16,000.

Polk was not quite as obscure as his detractors claimed. Though he was born in a log cabin in North Carolina's hill country, his father profited from an elaborate land speculation which moved him on to the rich lands of central Tennessee. In his turn, James inherited plantations and their concomitant slaves. Setting up a law practice, he went to Washington in 1824 as one of Jackson's House disciples, became Speaker in 1835. He resigned to run for Governor of Tennessee and won, but was twice defeated running for re-election.

Such a course record might have humbled other men. Not Polk. The minute he became President he made it emphatically clear that since he would have all the responsibility, he would make all the decisions. He dutifully consulted (then largely disregarded) all advice in picking his Cabinet, then scolded its members like schoolboys, demanding that they submit monthly reports on the performance of their clerks. He insisted that his Administration speak with one voice—his. If a Cabinet member dissented and took his disagreement to Congress, Polk warned, "he would find me as a lion in his path..." He exercised the same vigilance over party patronage. When a lowly postmaster, who happened to be a loyal Democrat, was fired in Tenn., Polk demanded a report from the Postmaster General, including the name of the man responsible for the firing. He chastised Treasury Secretary Robert J. Walker after receiving "a list of very obnoxious Whig clerks" who had not been fired; he also required that Walker discharge his Whig brother-in-law.

He watched everything and everybody. As he wrote in his diary: "If [the President] entrusts the details and smaller matters to subordinates, constant errors will occur." His life-style reflected this. He never spent a night outside Washington in his first 13 months in office. He trusted so few outsiders that his own wife Sarah took on the duties of his personal secretary, working ten and twelve hours a day at his side. Childless and a devout Presbyterian, she had an austerity of temperament to match his own: she banned drink, dancing and card playing in the White House.

At 49, Polk was the youngest man yet to be elected President. But he knew precisely what he intended to accomplish, and he listed his aims: "One, a reduction of the tariff; another, the reestablishment of the independent treasury; a third, the settlement of the Oregon boundary question; and, lastly, the acquisition of California." He accomplished all four.

It was the capture of the American West that most absorbed Polk. He fervently believed the new doctrine of "manifest destiny" enunciated by New York Editor John L. O'Sullivan. In Polk's (and most Americans') eyes, the U.S. was doing any nation a positive favor by taking the West over: "Our Union is a confederation of independent states, whose policy is peace with each other and all the world. To enlarge its limits is to extend the dominions of peace." He first addressed himself to Oregon, which by treaty had been jointly occupied with the British. The U.S. had offered to settle on the 49th parallel as a dividing line, but Britain balked and American jingoists were demanding "Fifty-four forty or Fight!"—a demand that would have put much of British Columbia in the U.S. "The only way to treat John Bull was to look him straight in the eye," Polk said later, and he threatened to abrogate the original treaty of joint occupation. Britain quickly agreed to the 49th parallel.

But it was with the Mexican War that Polk displayed his real mettle. It all began with Texas which, as a briefly independent nation, had applied for admission to the Union. Polk promptly ordered General Zachary Taylor to garrison a disputed area between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande. It seems clear that Polk's objective was to acquire California; he had already offered to buy it, but the Mexicans stood upon their honor and refused to consider the U.S. proposal. By this time, Polk had worked himself and the country into a state of rage about Mexico's "insults and wrongs." He began to prepare a message to Congress asking for "recognition of a state of war"—and waited for a pretext. It came with a report from General Taylor that 16 Americans had been killed or wounded by Mexicans on the east bank of the Rio Grande.

Polk directed the war with his usual obsessive vigor. He devised the basic strategy: even as Taylor attacked from the north, Polk ordered General Stephen Kearney to march to Santa Fe "to protect our traders there," then on to California, where Polk already had ordered U.S. naval forces to capture San Francisco and Monterey. Next, Polk decided to send General Winfield Scott with an expeditionary force to take Veracruz and push on to Mexico City. The President attended to everything—the purchase of army mules, the quarrels of military surgeons, the assignment of cargo ships—and brooked no interference. And somehow, he made it all work: in the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico accepted the Rio Grande as a boundary, and ceded the California and New Mexico territory for the price of $15 million—just about what Jefferson had paid for the Louisiana territory.

His declared objectives achieved, Polk resolutely refused to run for a second term, returned to "Polk's Place," his new home in Tennessee. But his work had worn him out. He was only 53, but his step was feeble and his hair had turned gray. Three months after he left office, what he had long described as "my disease (a derangement of the stomach and bowels)" proved fatal. He had seemed the most unromantic of men, but his last words were to the wife who had labored so long at his side. "I love you, Sarah," he said. "For all eternity, I love you."

Painting by William Brown, Jr.: Chicago Historical Society

Zachary Taylor (1849-1850)

Gentlemen, I was placed here to support the Constitution.
I have sworn to do it; I can do it; and I will *do it.*

"He looks more like an old farmer going to market with eggs to sell," said an Indiana captain about his Army commander. "On horseback, he looks like a toad," said an Illinoisan. Here was General Zachary Taylor bundling off to fight the Mexican War of 1846-1848 in a dingy green frock coat, pants of cottonade and an almost unbelievable broken straw hat. Here was manifest destiny unpretentious to a fault. His men called him "Old Rough and Ready."

These were still the anti-militarist days when the young nation feared what Hamilton had termed, in *Federalist 26*, a "danger to liberty from standing armies in times of peace." Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, with no pun intended, that " a company of soldiers is an offensive spectacle." And one of Zachary Taylor's immensely underrated services is that he epitomized a homespun, solicitous, civilian style of leadership that still runs deeper in the U.S. military tradition than in any other country's.

General Taylor was careful and deliberate. He won the war's first victory, at Palo Alto, not by launching some costly charge, but by holding back. He waited until his artillery, which outranged the Mexican guns, had grooved its bloody ducts. Always, Taylor was a front-line commander. At Resaca de la Palma, his second victory, a friendly sutler suggested he was too close to the enemy. "Let us ride a little nearer," said Old Rough and Ready, sword in hand.

His was a citizen tenacity. He fought house-to-house for three days to take Monterrey, his third victory. Before Buena Vista, his fourth victory, he rejected a surrender demand from a Mexican army four times as large as his own. General Taylor wrote to General Santa Anna an 1840s version of Bastogne's "Nuts": "I beg leave to say that I decline acceding to your request."

Implicit in Zachary Taylor's quality of leadership was also a quality of the heart, and it was perhaps this that won him the Presidency. After his four victorious battles, steaming home to New Orleans in glory aboard the *Monmouth*, he gave up his staterooms for some wounded volunteers. Then he disappeared. It was November, cold and wet, and the wind blew hard and high. The firemen had raised a sail in front of the boilers to keep out the rain, and had put down some old mattresses on the deck. Where was the hero of Monterrey and Buena Vista? A fireman said, "There is a clever old fellow asleep there under the sail, in front of the fire."

President Taylor was born at Montebello, Orange County, Virginia, on November 24, 1784. He was the third son of a lieutenant colonel in the Revolution, a descendant of Elder William Brewster of the *Mayflower*. He grew up near Louisville, Ky. in its earliest days. When the first glass windows were installed in a new residence, one of the local boys explained, "There is a house down here with specs on." Educated by a teacher from Connecticut, Taylor nonetheless misspelled his letter of acceptance of a regular infantry officer's commission: "I doo accept."

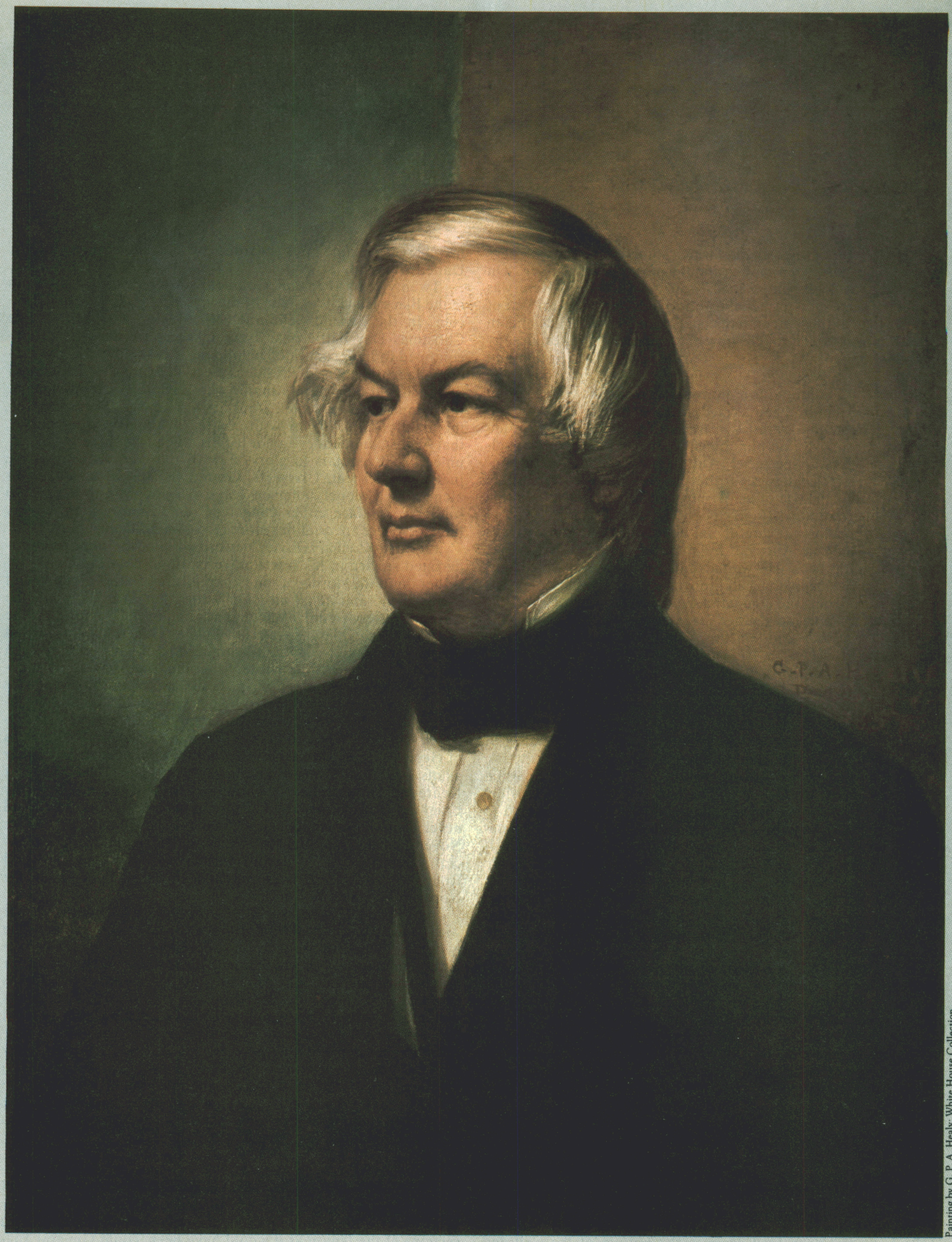
Four years afterward, a captain in the War of 1812, he led the defense of Fort Harrison, three miles above the present center of Terre Haute, Ind., against the braves of the Prophet. "What from the raging of the fire, the yelling and howling of several hundred Indians, the cries of nine women and children...and the desponding of so many of the men...I can assure you that my feelings were very unpleasant," Taylor recalled. But one of the women, Julia Lambert, clambered down to the bottom of the well and hoisted buckets of water to fight the fire. After the battle, President Madison conferred upon him the brevet rank of major, the first brevet of any kind awarded by the Government of the United States.

Twenty years after that, Colonel Zachary Taylor fought again in the Black Hawk War. One of the volunteers was Abraham Lincoln. In the Second Seminole War, Taylor won a desperate Christmas Day battle near Lake Okeechobee against musket-equipped Indians concealed behind moss-covered palmettos. Andrew Jackson advised President-elect Polk that if the United States should engage in a major war, Zachary Taylor should be the commander in chief. And it was in the Mexican War, mounted on Old Whitey with one leg swung over the pommel, that Army Commander Taylor led his tough town-meeting of volunteers and regulars to glory. Few of the men questioned the judgment of Lieut. Ulysses S. Grant, who served under Taylor along with Colonel Jefferson Davis (Taylor's son-in-law): "No soldier could face either danger or responsibility more calmly than he. These are qualities more rarely found than genius."

President Zachary Taylor performed another immensely underrated service in his brief, brave battle to hold the Union together amid the storms of the Compromise of 1850. "Rough and Ready is the man/That all good Whigs delight in/He's just the sort for President/And 'a' the man for fightin'." Thus rang out the songs of the torchlight parades of 1848 as General Taylor moved on to the soldier-candidate's traditional above-politics high ground. "If elected," he wrote, "I would endeavor to act independent of party domination, & should feel bound to administer the Government untrammeled by party schemes." With the support of John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, Abraham Lincoln of Illinois, Thurlow Weed of New York and Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia, he had won the Whig nomination over such familiar giants as Daniel Webster of Massachusetts and Henry Clay of Kentucky. He exceeded in popularity the not so humble Army Chief General Winfield Scott, a pompous commander who could never overcome the nickname, "Old Fuss and Feathers." In the November election, General Taylor defeated moderate Democrat Lewis Cass of Michigan with a nationwide appeal. Old Rough and Ready carried exacly half of the states, seven in the North and eight in the South.

As President, even as a Southerner and a plantation owner with slaves, Zachary Taylor took a strong Union line. "The people of the North need have no apprehension of the further extension of slavery," he proclaimed. He actively urged California and New Mexico to apply for admission to the Union in effect as free states. General Taylor swore that, if Southern states attempted to secede, he would personally lead the Army to put down the revolt. For a soldier of forty years' service, and for himself, the Union would always come first. And when Senator Clay and Webster put forth the omnibus legislation that would lead to the Compromise of 1850—which, though intended to solve the issue of slavery expansion, only increased friction between the North and the South—President Taylor was surely ready to veto it. But he never had the chance.

On July 9, 1850, after an acute attack of gastroenteritis suffered after partaking of uncooked fruits and vegetables and large quantities of milk and water, Old Rough and Ready died. "I fear," said Abraham Lincoln, "the one *great* question of the day is not now so likely to be partially acquiesced in by the different sections of the Union as it would have been, could General Taylor have been spared to us." It was little more than ten years before the American Civil War.



Painting by G. P. A. Healy: White House Collection

Millard Fillmore (1850-1853)

As no man is responsible for the circumstances of his birth,
they furnish nothing of which he should be ashamed or proud...

Millard Fillmore

"Go West, young man, go West," was the call of the day at mid-century as natives and immigrants alike set out in search of the land's golden wealth. But many went North: by the end of 1850, some 20,000 slaves had escaped from the South by way of the Underground Railroad. Among other happenings, the U.S. Navy outlawed floggings. A spiritualist received a letter from such dignitaries as Henry Clay, Sam Houston and Daniel Webster, asking him to speak in Washington about manifestations. Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale, was at last on her way to New York City for her American debut under the auspices of Phineas T. ("There's a sucker born every minute") Barnum. And Millard Fillmore, today the forgotten man of the Presidency, took office on July 9, 1850.

There are reasons, most of which should hardly be held against him, for his relative obscurity. He was a modest man, utterly without brag, who steadfastly refused to make political capital out of his humble log-cabin beginnings (his crib was a maple-sugar trough), which were much in vogue. Yet when he became President, his very modesty worked against him: unwilling or unable to assert himself, he was a whisper amid the thunder of gathering storms.

Apprenticed as a youth to a wool carder, he desperately sought an education, and he later gave a touching account of that struggle. He had, he recalled, bought a cheap dictionary. "While attending the carding machines, I used to place the dictionary on the desk—by which I passed every two minutes in feeding the machines and removing the rolls—and in this way I could have a moment to look at a word..." He attended his first school at 18—and fell in love with the schoolmistress who, seven years later, became his wife Abigail. Throughout his life, Millard Fillmore was sensitive to his lack of classical learning: when, after he left the White House, Oxford offered him an honorary degree written in Latin, he declined on grounds that "no man should accept...a degree he cannot read."

A local Quaker lawyer in Fillmore's native upstate New York gave him a job as clerk, and, admitted to the bar at 23, he established himself as a capable and conscientious, if not dazzling, lawyer. In 1828 he was elected to the state legislature as an Anti-mason. Then and later, Fillmore had an affinity for peculiar political parties: the Antimasons, who in 1833 also sent him to the House, held the workingman's distrust of elitist secret societies, called for an end to secrecy and intrigue in government. Next, Fillmore tried that briefly successful conglomerate of disparate interests, the Whig Party, on whose ticket he was three times elected to the House of Representatives and, in 1848, to be Vice President under Zachary Taylor. Finally, almost four years after his Presidency, he went to an opposite extreme, running unsuccessfully (he carried only Maryland) for President as the nominee of the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant American ("Know Nothing") Party, which itself had sprung from a secret society.

As Vice President, Fillmore presided over six months of classic Senate debate, in which the opposing forces were led by three of the most eloquent orators in American history: John C. Calhoun, the South's voice of Nullification; Daniel Webster—"The godlike Daniel"—of Massachusetts, and Henry Clay, once "The Millboy of the Slashes," now "The Great Compromiser." The issue—as always in those days of fire and fury—was slavery and its extension into new territories. And though the antagonists were to prove unreconcilable, Clay had presented an omnibus compromise bill, calling for: the admission of California as a free state; the organization of the New Mexico and Utah territories without mention of slavery; the settlement of Texas boundary claims by federal payment of $10 million on the debts of the republic of Texas; prohibition of the slave trade in the District of Columbia; and a tougher fugitive slave law.

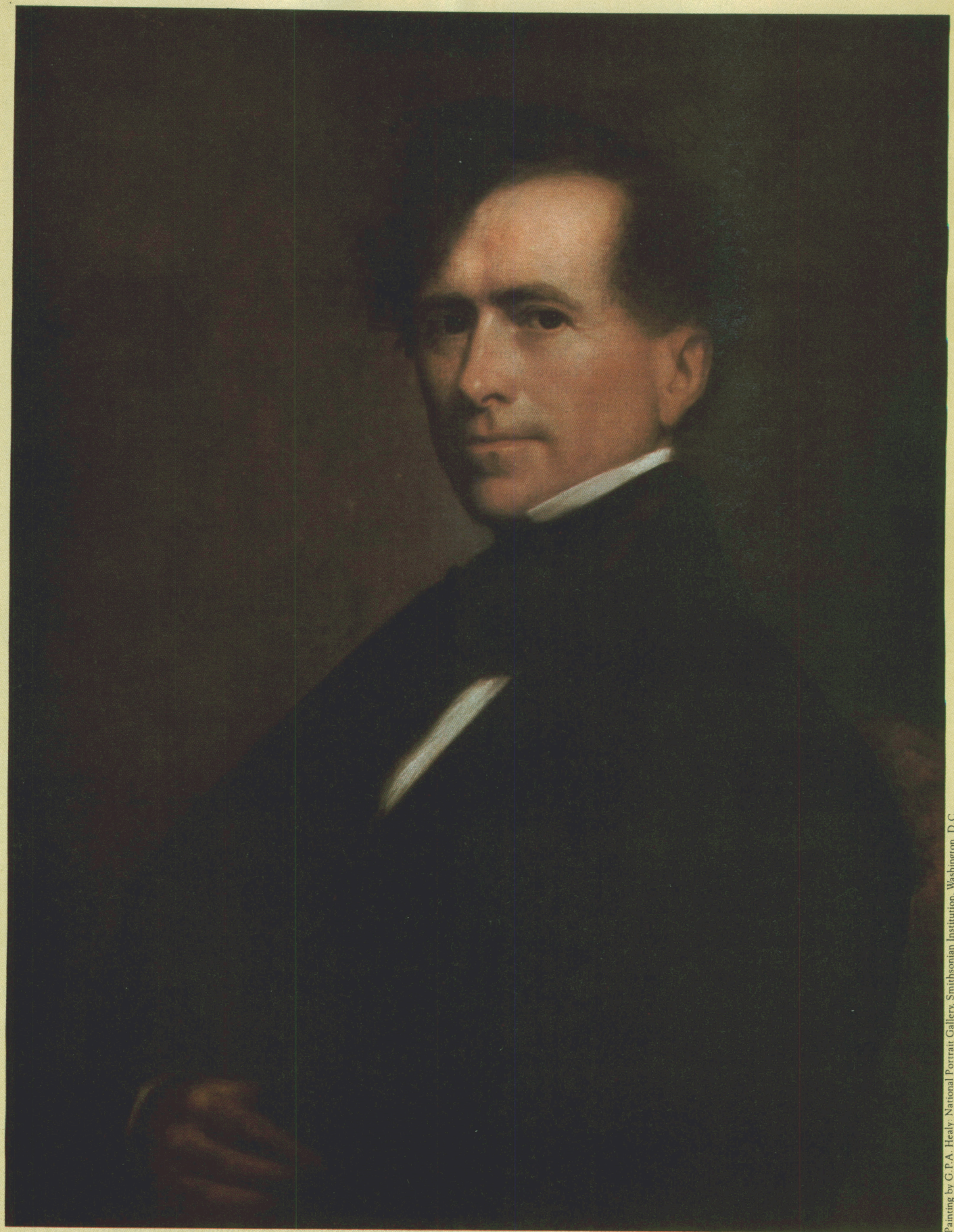
President Taylor wanted no part of Clay's compromise—or of anything else that smacked of extending slavery—and when his dander was up, the old general was not a man to be trifled with. But Vice President Fillmore, who had listened to the Senate debate without expressing an opinion, had finally formed one: a few days before the President's death, he told Taylor that if the Senate vote were deadlocked, then he, as Vice President, would cast the deciding vote in favor of the compromise. Said he later: "I wished him to understand that it was not out of any hostility to him or his Administration, but...because I deemed it for the interests of the country."

It was an act of some courage, but he was never required to meet its test: before the Senate acted, Taylor was dead, and President Millard Fillmore immediately threw the weight of his Administration onto the side of the compromise. Within eleven weeks after Fillmore took over, five compromise bills had been passed—and signed into law.

The Great Compromise of 1850 was the ruination of Millard Fillmore's presidency. Neither side was satisfied, and both arrayed themselves against the man who had approved the Compromise. The South saw the admittance of a free California, along with a New Mexico and Utah that seemed likely to be free, as a prelude to abolition; before he was through, Fillmore had to send federal troops to Charleston, S.C., against the threat of insurrection. The fugitive slave law was odious to the North—and Fillmore was forced to promise military action against defiance. In a hopeless situation, he was helpless.

Thus history has relegated Millard Fillmore to its remote recesses. But it seems a pity. In times less trying of men's souls, he might have made a fine President. He looked the part: tall, deep-chested, of dignified bearing and gracious manners, with graying hair and ruddy complexion. His instincts were in the right places: perhaps because he had suffered in achieving an education, he was deeply committed to the advancement of learning. While Wife Abigail installed the first White House library, President Fillmore went out and fought alongside firemen to put out a blaze at the Library of Congress (35,000 out of 55,000 books were destroyed). He served for almost 30 years as honorary chancellor of the University of Buffalo. As chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, he had helped Samuel F. B. Morse get the funds to develop the telegraph. Indeed, he was always interested in inventions: when a White House cook could not figure out how to work a newly developed stove, President Fillmore went to the U.S. Patent Office, inspected the plans, and taught the cook how to use it.

But none of that helped him. He lost the 1852 Whig nomination to General Winfield Scott, who in turn lost the election to Democrat Franklin Pierce. One of Fillmore's last public appearances came in April 1865, when he served as head of a committee escorting Lincoln's funeral train from Batavia, N.Y., to Buffalo. It is interesting to speculate as to what went through Millard Fillmore's mind as he saw Abraham Lincoln pass into a nation's remembrance of greatness.



Painting by G.P.A. Healy: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Franklin Pierce (1853-1857)

You have summoned me in my weakness;
you must sustain me by your strength.

When a messenger galloped to their carriage to tell Franklin Pierce that he had been nominated for the Presidency, his wife fainted—not from elation but from dismay. Jane Appleton Pierce never wanted her husband to be President.

Neither did a large percentage of the Democratic Party. The delegates meeting in the steaming heat of a Baltimore summer voted and voted through some 48 ballots. But on the third day and the 49th ballot, out of frustration and exhaustion, they nominated this man of few known views except that he was a Northerner who argued that the right of Southern states to allow "involuntary servitude" was protected by the Constitution. A disappointed rival, Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas, quipped: "Hereafter, no private citizen is safe." But the Whigs were in even greater disarray than the Democrats, and Pierce beat General Winfield Scott handily.

Until he married Jane Appleton at the age of 29, Franklin Pierce had seemed to both others and himself a man of promise. His father was Governor of New Hampshire, a rough and tough pioneer who had never finished high school but had commanded troops in the Revolutionary War. Son Franklin had had the advantages his father did not, attending Bowdoin College (where he formed a lifelong friendship with Nathaniel Hawthorne) and moving on to a law practice and early political preferment. Mostly, he found himself one of the youngest in any assembly—a member of the New Hampshire legislature at 25, a U.S. Congressman at 29, a U.S. Senator at 33. He was merry, he had enormous personal magnetism, he liked company and the company liked him. Jane Appleton was the daughter of the president of Bowdoin College; she belonged to New England's Whig aristocracy as Pierce did not. She was pretty, she was frail, she was subject to "nerves," she was fanatically religious, and from the time Pierce married her, she hung over his career like a perpetual rain cloud. She was right about one thing—Pierce did indeed have a "drinking problem." Mrs. Pierce hated Washington not only because of its summer heat, but also because the convivial atmosphere encouraged her husband's "weakness." After her husband had served a single term as Senator, she persuaded him to resign and return to New Hampshire and his practice as a private lawyer. He had made no mark as a legislator, being remembered only for stating that there was in his home state "not one in a hundred who does not entertain the most sacred regard for the rights of their Southern brethren..."

So at 38 Pierce "retired" from public life. But despite his wife, he could not resist the pursuit of politics, establishing himself as the political boss of New Hampshire's Democratic Party. During the Mexican War, he got himself commissioned a brigadier general, served briefly and with considerable gallantry in the Mexico City campaign.

A meager set of credentials for a man who would be President? Even Pierce seemed to agree. His self-confidence, never totally strong, was further shattered by personal tragedy. His first two children had died in infancy. Their third son, Bennie, had survived and at age nine was the mutual pride and joy of the Pierces. In the interval between his election and Inauguration, the Pierces took the train from Boston to Concord. A little over a mile from Boston, the train crashed. The two parents were unhurt; but Bennie was crushed to death. Mrs. Pierce forthwith took to her bed, decided that God had exacted Bennie's death so that Pierce would have no distraction in his new and great duties. In short, his election had been purchased at the price of her son's death. With this burden of guilt, Pierce entered upon his Presidency. "How I shall be able to summon my manhood and gather up my energies for the duties before me, it is hard for me to see," he wrote Jefferson Davis.

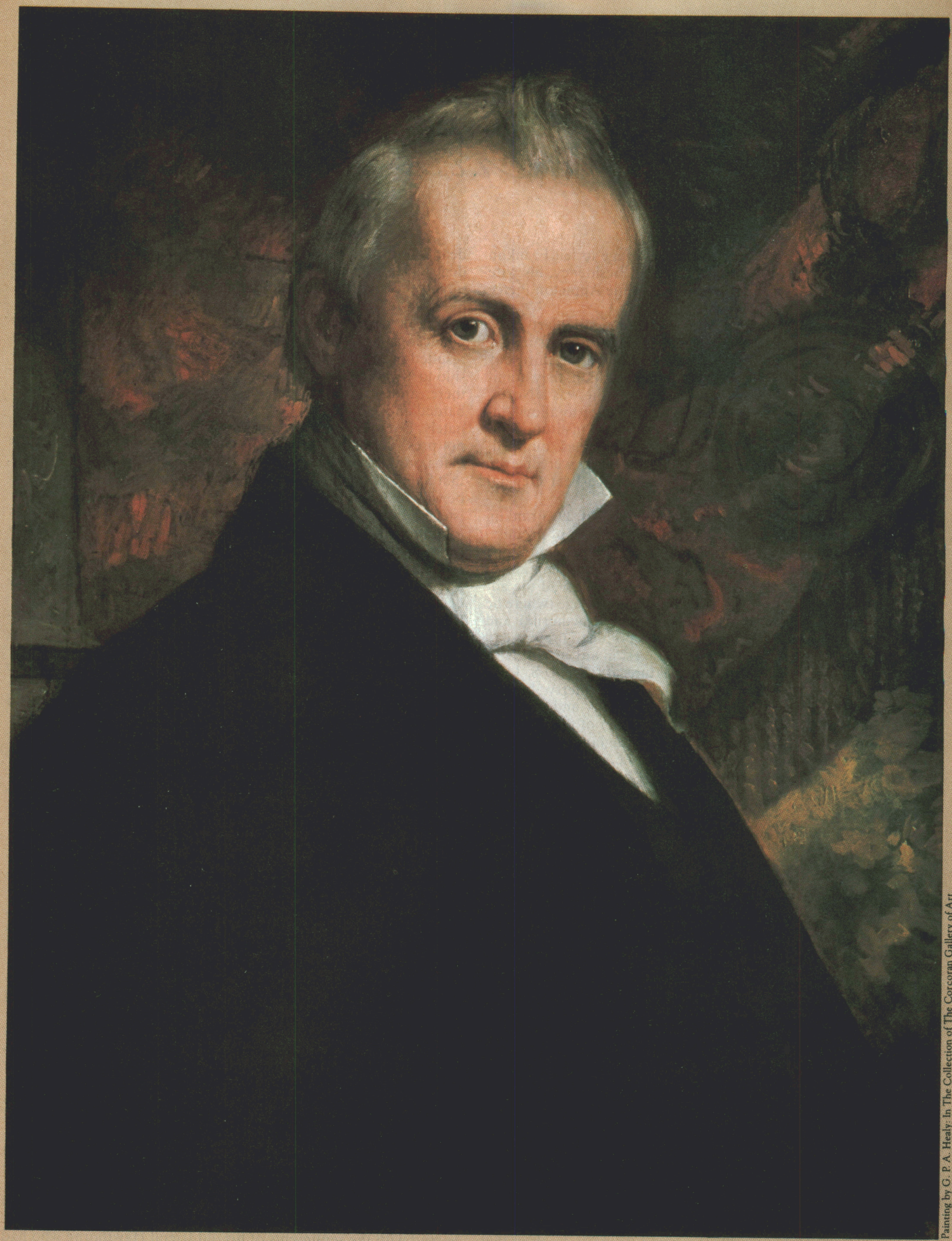
For a man who was neither strong nor vigorous, he announced a strong and vigorous foreign policy. In one event, this resulted in an inept attempt at gunboat diplomacy. He sent a warship to Nicaragua to redress an assault on the U.S. representative there, and was rather appalled when the ship's captain bombarded and leveled Greytown, then a British protectorate. Fortunately, Britain had become involved in the Crimean War and did not press the matter. Equally inept was Pierce's handling of the Cuba problem. Cuba was still owned by Spain, and there was talk that Spain, deep in both economic and political difficulties might be willing to sell the island. Pierce proposed that three U.S. ministers in Europe—to Britain, France and Spain—meet and produce a solution. The result was the so-called Ostend Manifesto, which recommended that if Spain refused to sell Cuba, then "by every law, human and divine, we shall be justified in wresting it from Spain if we possess the power." Spain refused to sell, and Pierce declined to make good on the threat.

Even more crucial was the slavery question. Pierce clung to the idea that the Compromise of 1850 had settled everything, even though it included a fugitive-slave law, permitting a slaveowner to demand that local authorities, even in the North, help him recover his property. Thus Pierce found himself sending federal troops to Boston to ensure the extradition of an escaped slave. Boston's indignant citizens lined the streets to hiss and boo.

Worst of all was the Kansas-Nebraska dispute. It arose over railroads. The South advocated a rail route to the West which would run through Texas and south of the Rocky Mountains. When it became apparent that a snippet of Mexican territory was necessary to complete the route, Pierce obligingly sent James Gadsden to offer Mexico some $10 million for the strip. But Senator Douglas wanted to promote a central route through Kansas, and to achive it he had to organize what was then known as the Kansas-Nebraska territory. He introduced a bill allowing the issue of slavery in the territory to be settled by "popular sovereignty," and thus effectively repealing the Missouri Compromise, which had banned slavery above the 36°-30′ parallel. Pierce, a man who advocated compromise at all costs, endorsed the bill, and found he had stirred up a hornet's nest.

Missouri slaveholders rushed some 5,000 "voters" into the territory. Free-soilers countered by organizing the Emigrant Aid Company, to help free men to move into Kansas and buy homesteads. Soon Northern "jayhawkers" were fighting Southerners in open battle. Month by month, the situation deteriorated as Southern and Northern speculators scrambled to grab land for themselves over the heads of the hapless and helpless Indians (who technically owned most of it). Pierce initially protested that the Federal Government had no right to intervene in the rights of a state, dismissing the whole thing as "mere angry, idle, aimless disturbances of public peace and tranquillity." He did little but sporadically authorize the use of federal troops, while men on both sides died and Lawrence, Kans., was sacked.

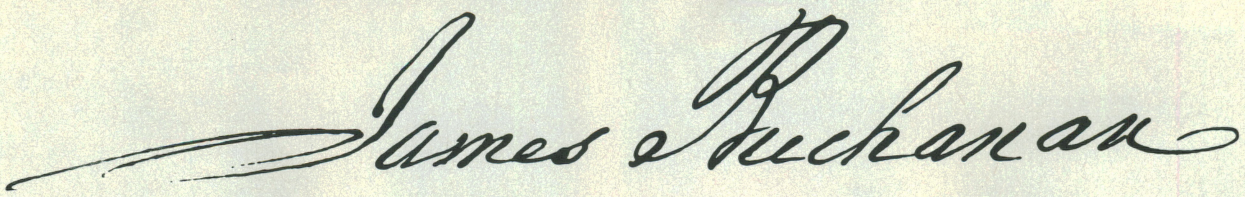
As his term's end approached, Pierce made a halfhearted and abortive attempt to get renominated. But at heart, he probably agreed with the sentiments of his old friend Hawthorne who had written him, "Frank, I pity you—indeed I do, from the bottom of my heart."



Painting by G. P. A. Healy: In The Collection of The Corcoran Gallery of Art

James Buchanan (1857-1861)

Whatever the result may be, I shall carry to my grave the consciousness that I at least meant well for my country.



Sixty-five years and one day old, James Buchanan was the "fresh face" of the Presidential campaign when he landed from the *Arago* in New York Harbor on April 24, 1856 to seek the Democratic nomination. He was new, and needed, because he had been out of the country as Minister to Great Britain and was not involved in the Democrats' suicidal splits over the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act. He was also warmly remembered for his advocacy in more than 40 years of public service of compromise between the North and South. "Disunion," said the respected Pennsylvania politician, "is a word which ought not to be breathed amongst us even in a whisper. Our children ought to be taught that it is a sacrilege to pronounce it. There is nothing stable but Heaven and the Constitution."

On May 22, 1856, South Carolina Congressman Preston S. Brooks responded to a verbal attack on a relative by Massachusetts' radical Senator Charles Sumner, clubbing the white-haired antislavery advocate until he fell unconscious to the Senate floor. Two days afterward, the abolitionist John Brown, his four sons and two followers went out on a dark night and massacred five men selected at random from the homesteads of Pottawatomie Creek, Kansas. Amid roiling tensions, Buchanan won the Democratic nomination on the 17th ballot, and opted to run a cooling and calming, front-porch campaign. "This race ought to be run on the question of Union or disunion," he said, and the Democratic platform took a stand against any further agitation of the slavery question.

James Buchanan, born in a comfortable log cabin at Stony Batter, Pennsylvania, April 23, 1791, educated at Dickinson College, an overnight volunteer in the War of 1812, had become a highly paid lawyer in Lancaster, a state assemblyman, a five-term member of the U.S. House of Representatives. As a Congressman, he demonstrated his fervent belief in the checks and balances of the Constitution, leading a fight to prevent Congress from repealing the authority of the Supreme Court to review state legislation. As a U.S. Senator from Pennsylvania, he fought the proposals of Senators Clay and Webster to deprive the President of the power to fire Executive Branch officers. To give the Senate that power, argued Buchanan, would subordinate the President to Congress, "a position in which the Constitution of the country never intended to place him."

"Restraint, restraint," Senator Buchanan defined his lifelong philosophy. "This Federal government is nothing but a system of restraints from beginning to end." And specifically, on the one great question of the day: "Touch this question of slavery seriously...and the Union is from that moment dissolved...Although in Pennsylvania we are all opposed to slavery in the abstract, yet we will never violate the constitutional compact we have made with our sister states. It is their own question, and there let it remain."

Through the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s, Buchanan served distinguished stints as a diplomat—which did nothing to dilute his faith in compromise as a solution to most problems. As Minister to Russia, 1832-1833, he negotiated the first commercial treaty the Russian Imperial government had concluded with any sovereign nation. In 1837, he was made chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee only three years after his election to the Senate. As Secretary of State under Polk, he often helped, sometimes harassed, the President in creating a new American empire that stretched from the Rio Grande to San Diego.

As Minister to Great Britain, 1853-1856, Buchanan charmed Queen Victoria and many of her ministers while firmly warning British imperialists not to fish in troubled Caribbean waters. His favorite diplomatic project was to offer Spain $100 million, perhaps more, for the island of Cuba, but the Spaniards were not interested. In the controversial Ostend Manifesto, Buchanan and a couple of other senior U.S. diplomats suggested that if Spain would not sell Cuba, then the U.S. ought to seize it.

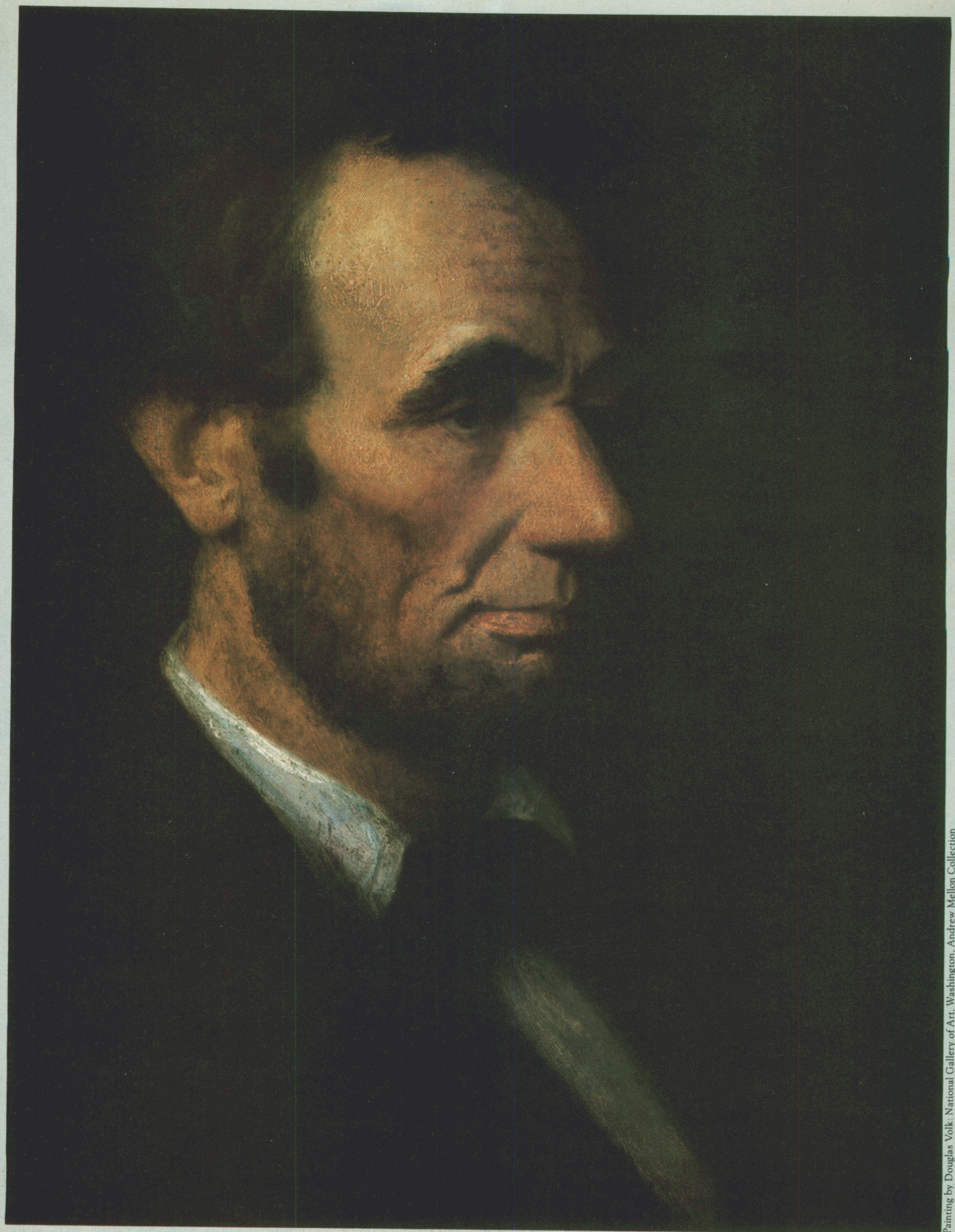
In the presidential election of 1856, James Buchanan was elected with 1,800,000 votes to 1,300,000 for the first Republican Party Presidential candidate, the explorer John C. Frémont, and 900,000 for former President Millard Fillmore running as a Know-Nothing. Buchanan had less than a majority and needed his native Keystone State to put him across.

He sought at first to define a middle ground between abolitionists and secessionists hell-bent, as he saw it, for civil war. "The great object of my Administration," he said, "will be to arrest, if possible, the agitation of the slavery question at the North and to destroy sectional parties." But under continuing pressure, he eventually said he was ready to admit Kansas—Bleeding Kansas—to the Union as a slave state. This caused Senator Stephen A. Douglas, the "Little Giant" of Illinois, to lead Northern Democrats in a revolt against their own Administration. After the mid-term elections of 1858, after heavy losses in Congress, President Buchanan wrote forlornly to his orphan niece, his dazzling White House hostess Harriet Lane (to whom the song *Listen To The Mocking Bird* was dedicated): "Well; We have met the enemy, and we are theirs."

Throughout his Administration, the thunderclaps dinned to distraction the Pennsylvania politician who had thought he could keep the nation calm and negotiate the solutions. Dred Scott. John Brown's raid. And always, Kansas. Even the dalliance of this bachelor President—the U.S.'s only one—with a Virginia widow became controversial when abolitionists made off with the lady's slave maid. To make matters worse, even nonslavery matters went wrong. There was a financial panic, veto of a popular Homestead Bill, an odd scheme to annex Sonora and Chihuahua from Mexico. By the fall of 1860, when Republican Abraham Lincoln was elected with less than a majority over Democrat Douglas, Constitutional Unionist John Bell, and Southern Democrat John C. Breckinridge, James Buchanan was little more than a spectator.

President Buchanan's worst moments came when, as a lame duck, he "let" South Carolina secede and was termed a traitor for it. By Buchanan's constitutional lights, secession was illegal, but so would have been an act of coercion by the Federal Government against a state. Into this epochal dilemma sailed the side-wheel merchant steamer *Star of the West,* bringing reinforcements and foodstuffs for the beleaguered federal Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. South Carolina shore batteries drove the vessel away. Buchanan did not respond. Only after President Lincoln had taken office, and the Confederates had bombarded Fort Sumter itself, did the heartbroken diplomat come out for energetic prosecution of the war.

On June 1, 1868, 77 years old and still vilified, Buchanan died at Wheatland, his estate near Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Not long before his death, he wrote: "Many grievous errors were committed by both parties from the beginning." He did not write it, but history might, that he was blamed for more than his share.



Painting by Douglas Volk: National Gallery of Art, Washington, Andrew Mellon Collection

Abraham Lincoln (1861-April 14, 1865)

It can all be condensed into a single sentence, and that sentence you will find in Gray's Elegy—
"the short and simple annals of the poor." That's my life, and that's all you or anyone else can make of it.

Abraham Lincoln

The President's body was too long for the bed, and his feet dangled over the end. His right eye was black. His breathing was swift and shallow, and occasionally he moaned. Mary Todd Lincoln was brought into the room; she stood wordless for a few moments and was led out again. At 7:22:10 on the morning of April 15, 1865, the President's chest heaved, then relaxed and did not move again. Surgeon General Joseph K. Barnes pressed his ear against the chest, straightened, took two silver coins from his vest pocket and placed them upon the President's eyelids. War Secretary Edwin M. Stanton, who was to become the marplot of the succeeding Administration, had been standing at the foot of the bed, hat in hand. "Now," said Stanton, "he belongs to the ages."

Abraham Lincoln had belonged to all humanity, but to no man. To some, he was Honest Abe or Old Abe or Father Abraham. To others, he was the Rail Splitter or the Great Emancipator. To still others, in the rages of his day, he was the Abolition Emperor or the Orangutan at the White House. In 1963, on the 40th anniversary of its founding, TIME portrayed Lincoln on its cover and wrote: "He was neither a rebel nor a conservative, but a conserver. He was no artist, except in using public language and in using men. His life was an infinitely varied mixture of leading and following, conforming and defying. He could temporize, compromise and maneuver. But he always held to his own vision and met the exacting definition of an individual set down by French Philosopher Georges Bernanos: 'A man who gives himself or refuses himself, but never lends himself.' Above all, Lincoln was an individual in the special double sense that Americans attribute to the word—the common man who is yet uncommon."

His native soil was the dirt floor of the 18 ft.-by-16 ft. log cabin in backwoods Kentucky, where he was born on a bed of cornhusks and bearskins at a time when, far over the horizon, Thomas Jefferson was just winding up his second term as President. His common blood was that of Thomas Lincoln, a carpenter, and of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, the illegitimate daughter of someone later described by Lincoln as "a nobelman so called of Virginia." Lincoln's boyhood and early maturity have become part of American folklore, as familiar (and far more authentic) to every schoolchild as Parson Weems' story of George Washington and the cherry tree, which was, incidentally, one of the works read by the young Lincoln in the glimmering light of his woodshavings fire. He seemed contradictory. He was the tall teller of droll tales, some of them spun in moments of considerable discouragement. He was the self-taught lawyer who, since he had no files, kept his papers in his hat. He was the brash bumpkin legislator who sauntered across a ballroom and said to Mary Todd, a vivacious girl of good family: "Miss Todd, I want to dance with you in the worst way." He was the reluctant groom backing out of marriage at the last moment, then spending more than a year in deep, almost suicidal gloom.

But more than anything else, he was, in the noblest meaning of the word, a politician—a mediator between individual dreams and human realities, devoted and determined without being dogmatic, a man who could give without bending and bend without breaking. Herein lay his consistency.

Running for the Illinois assembly in 1832, he introduced himself to the electorate by saying, "I am humble Abraham Lincoln." He lost, but won two years later, and it was in the state legislature that Abraham Lincoln declared himself on slavery. The institution, he said, was "founded on both injustice and bad policy." Twenty-three years later, he could note that his original idea was pretty much "the same that it is now."

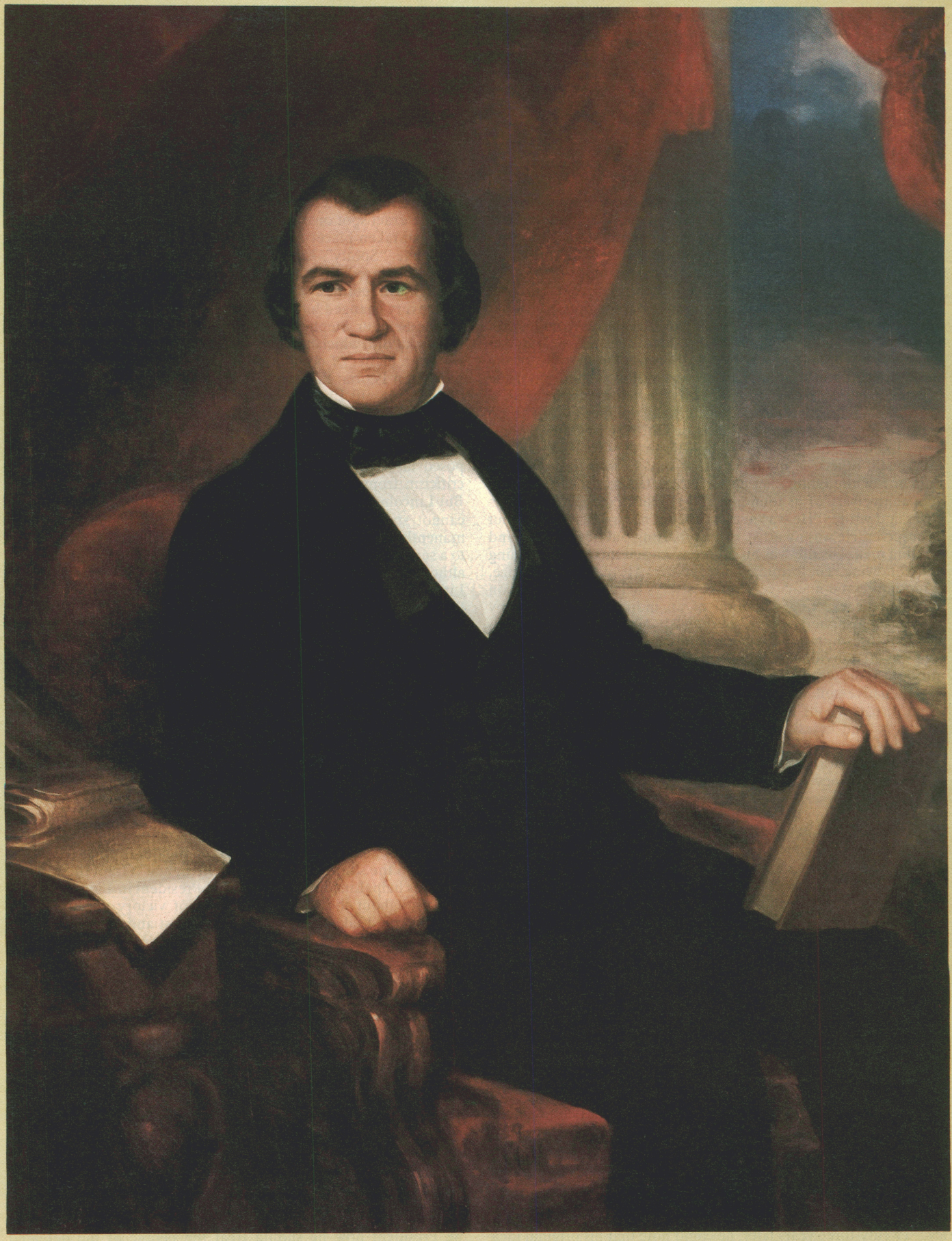
Lincoln was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1846 and immediately set about demanding that President Polk cite the exact spot on which the first provocation of the Mexican War had taken place; for this, he won from a partisan press the nickname "Spotty" Lincoln. He left Congress after only one term, convinced that he had been a failure and that he was through with politics.

Slavery changed his mind. When he heard that Illinois' Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas had proposed the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which made the extension of slavery into those territories a matter of popular vote, Lincoln hit the stump, offering passion in Peoria: "I hate it because of the monsterous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world..." He ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate in 1855, and in 1858 received the Senate nomination of the fledgling Republican Party. He laboriously composed his acceptance speech, and one passage received strong criticism from his friends ("A damn fool utterance," said one). But Lincoln delivered it anyway: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this Government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free." Lincoln challenged Douglas to a series of face-to-face debates—there were seven of them—and although he lost that election the debates propelled Abraham Lincoln onto the national scene, resulting in his nomination for President in 1860.

Abraham Lincoln—Civil War President. Worry followed by anxiety followed by anguish. When troops were slow to arrive for the defense of Washington: "Why don't they come? Why don't they come!" Later: "The bottom is out of the tub. What shall I do?" After Chancellorsville, a murderous Union defeat: "My God! My God! What will the country say? What will the country say?" He went through general after general, a litany of failure: McDowell, McClellan, Pope, McClellan again, Burnside, Hooker, Meade. None satisfied his or the nation's needs. He had a political, not a military mind, but he read up on strategy and tactics. He made many mistakes, but he came to know one thing: it was the army of Robert E. Lee, not the piece of real estate that was Richmond, the Confederate capital, that must be destroyed. To this end, he finally chose as his commander in chief Ulysses S. Grant, on the simple premise that "he fights." Grant did the job. With his help, Lincoln was re-elected President in 1864.

Throughout the war, in moments of victory and of defeat, Lincoln could take pride in America's past and find hope for its future. After the turning point at Gettysburg, he spoke at the dedication there of the cemetery for Union war dead. Legend would have it that he dashed off his remarks on the back of an envelope while on the train to the scene. Not so. He worked hard on the talk, writing and revising. But its words are engraved in American history: "Four score and seven years ago..."

Abraham Lincoln had always been a lover of such diversions as theater: "I must have a change of some sort or die." And so, only five days after Appomattox, he and Mary Todd Lincoln went to Ford's Theater in Washington to view a performance of *Our American Cousin.* It was there that he became the first U.S. President to be assassinated. His killer, John Wilkes Booth, leaped to the stage crying, "*Sic semper tyrannis.*" Little did his enflamed mind understand that he was to bring down the scourge of a vindictive Reconstruction upon the South he loved. For Abraham Lincoln had had in mind an understanding peace aimed at bringing the Union together again. When a Union general had asked the President how he should treat the people of the defeated South, Lincoln replied: "If I were in your place, I'd let'em up easy, let'em up easy."



Painting by William Cooper. Tennessee Historical Society

Andrew Johnson (1865-1869)

Let them impeach and be damned!

Andrew Johnson

"I have no other ambition in life," proclaimed the tailor-President, "than to mend and repair the breaches in the torn and tattered Constitution of my country." An old lady was somewhat confused by the allusions. "Bless his dear heart," she murmured. "Andy's going to come home and open up his tailor shop again." Indeed, there may have been occasions when President Andrew Johnson, who held office while the nation recovered from the shock of assassination and endured the trauma of Reconstruction, wished he could go home.

But probably not. Andrew Johnson was a scarred veteran of Tennessee's dark and bloody political grounds, willing to trade eye for eye, tooth for tooth and insult for insult, and he never ran away from anything in his life—except, at 15, the tailor to whom he had been apprenticed. Born in a shack, fatherless at three, he was practically illiterate until after his marriage at 19, when his wife Eliza, herself a shoemaker's daughter, took his education in hand. Wherever he went and whatever he did, Johnson would never forget—nor would he let anyone else forget—his humble beginnings. "One of the people by birth," said his longtime foe Jefferson Davis, "he remained so by conviction." He gloried in his nickname, the "Old Commoner." True to his original calling, he made some of his own clothes even as President. When his workingman's background was remarked against him, he bristled. "I am proud to own it," he declared. "Neither do I forget that Adam was a tailor and sewed fig leaves, or that our Saviour was the son of a carpenter." He was defiantly self-reliant, grimly serious, totally persevering, intensely patriotic. All of these characteristics helped him along his career as an alderman, mayor, state assemblyman, U.S. Representative, Governor, Senator, Vice President and President. But they also almost brought him down.

Johnson was a Democrat, but his independent spirit permitted only nominal party ties. He was a States' rights man and a slaveowner, but for him the Union came first. "I love my country; I love the Constitution," he said from his Senate seat in 1860. "Senators, my blood, my existence, I would give to save this Union." He almost did too. After attending Lincoln's Inauguration in 1861, he was returning home when he was set upon by a mob in Lynchburg, Va., dragged from his train, reviled, spat upon, and suffered a rope to be placed around his neck. He was released only when someone suggested that Tennessee might like to hang its own traitor. When war came, Andrew Johnson alone among 22 Southern Senators remained with the Union.

Early in 1862, on appointment by President Lincoln after Union forces took Nashville, Johnson took over in Tennessee as Military Governor. The assignment required courage, a commodity Johnson possessed in large quantity. Years before, hearing of a plan to assassinate him, he had faced down a crowd: "I beg respectfully to propose that this be the first business in order—if any man has come here tonight for the purpose indicated, I do not say to him let him speak, but let him shoot." He stood waiting, his hand on his pistol, but no one came forth.

Abraham Lincoln liked that sort of fortitude. Moreover, he wanted as a running mate in his try for re-election a war Democrat from the South—and there weren't many. Johnson was therefore tapped and, running on the National Union Party ticket, was elected Vice President under Lincoln in 1864. His swearing-in ceremony was a disaster: nervous and weakened from a bout with typhoid fever (he had asked Lincoln to excuse him from the ritual), he drank a large tumbler of brandy, then another. Mounting the rostrum in the Senate chamber to take the oath, Johnson must have imagined he was back on the upland Tennessee stump: his speech was rambling, wild, an appalling embarrassment. "Andy ain't no drunkard," Lincoln insisted (having earlier sent an investigator to Tennessee to look into Johnson's drinking habits, which were generally moderate). But the damage was done. From then on, Johnson was "that drunken tailor" to Radicals in Congress and "Andy the Sot" in the partisan press.

On the night of April 14, 1865, Conspirator George Atzerodt was assigned to murder Vice President Johnson. Atzerodt's nerve failed; John Wilkes Booth's did not. Johnson, shaken with grief, took the Presidential oath the next morning, and on May 29, 1865, doing as he thought Lincoln would have wished, Johnson announced his Reconstruction policy. His conviction: "The only safety of the nation lies in a generous and expansive plan of conciliation, and the longer this is delayed, the more difficult will it be to bring the North and the South into harmony."

But the Radical Republicans, led by Pennsylvania's implacable Representative Thaddeus Stevens, the grim reaper of Reconstruction, were having none of such soft notions. "If something is not done, the President will be crowned King before the Congress meets," cried Stevens, in a political declaration of war. At the end of the year, Stevens was named chairman of a select, joint Committee of Fifteen, which "carried in its girdle the keys to the Union." He guarded those keys with extreme jealousy: without them, no Southern state could gain readmittance. For two years, bill after bill—all offensive to the South, many aimed directly at Johnson—passed over the President's veto. One of them, the Tenure of Office Act of 1867, required Senate consent for the President to remove any officer who had been appointed by and with the advice of the Senate, and it led to Andrew Johnson's impeachment.

On Feb. 25, 1868, a solemn and shameful day in U.S. history, a resolution of impeachment, voted by the House the day before, was presented to the Senate. The main charge was that Johnson had violated the Tenure of Office Act (which was itself later found unconstitutional) by firing War Secretary Stanton, who had been working as a Radical cat's-paw within Johnson's Cabinet. Among the other "high crimes and misdemeanors," Johnson was accused of giving speeches "in a loud voice."

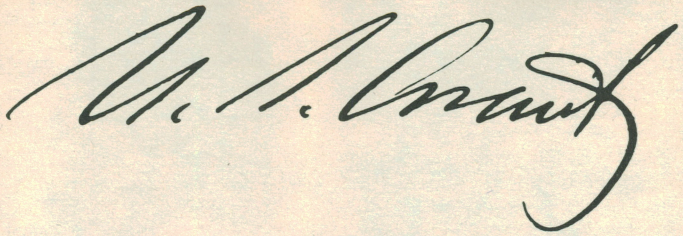
The Constitution clearly contemplates that Senate impeachment trials be judicial, not political, in nature. But there was no doubt of the fierce and violent political forces that dominated Johnson's trial. Wrote Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles: "Those who may vote to convict would as readily vote to impeach the President had he been accused of stepping on a dog's tail." During the two months of the trial, bribes were offered and, intimidating threats were made. Said old "Tad" Stevens, who was even then suffering his fatal illness: "Any Senator who votes to acquit will be tortured on the gibbet of everlasting obloquy." Said freshman Senator Edmund G. Ross, an obscure Kansas Radical who was to cast the deciding vote against conviction: "I felt that I was literally looking into my open grave." (In a sense, he was: at the next elections Ross was defeated, like the other six Republicans who voted for acquittal.) On May 16, 1868, the move to impeach President Andrew Johnson failed of the required two-thirds majority by a single vote—the vote by which the legitimacy of Presidential succession remained unstained.

The tailor from Tennessee served out his term and went home. But Washington had not seen the last of him: after two unsuccessful tries, he was once more elected to the Senate, and when he entered its chamber he received a standing ovation. His death came four months later and, as he had requested, he was buried with an American flag as his winding, his copy of the Constitution beneath his head.

Painting by Ferdinand Boyle: Long Island Historical Society

Ulysses S. Grant (1869-1877)

One of my superstitions had always been when I started to go anywhere, or to do anything, not to turn back, or stop, until the thing intended was accomplished.



One month from death, Ulysses S. Grant sat in a wicker chair on the porch of a summer home at Mount McGregor, New York. It was June 1885, 20 years and two months after his shattering triumph at Appomattox, and now his grizzled beard was mostly white, his famous hunched shoulders were swathed in blankets, and a wool stocking cap was crumpled on his head. "A verb is anything that signifies to be; to do; or to suffer," he wrote in a memorandum to his physician, Dr. J. H. Douglas, adding, "I signify all three." General Grant communicated in memoranda, even to his beloved wife of 36 years, Julia Dent Grant, since his throat was torn by cancer and he could barely manage a croak.

General Grant's mission at Mount McGregor was the completion of eleven months of work on his *Memoirs,* something close to 300,000 words that his publisher, Mark Twain, thought might rival Caesar's *Commentaries* as a classic of military literature. Grant sat there on his porch, scratching sentences on a student's note pad, his small hand grasping the pencil as if it were an army that must not be let go until it surrendered. Grant was going to finish his *Memoirs* before he died, not just to bring his family out of insolvency, not just to render his final tribute to the American soldiers he had fought with and against, but because he always completed whatever it was he set out to do.

Perhaps not like Caesar, but like Grant, he told his story of the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia: "What General Lee's feelings were I do not know. As he was a man of much dignity, with an impassable face, it was impossible to say whether he felt inwardly glad that the end had finally come, or felt sad over the result, and was too manly to show it...my own feelings, which had been quite jubilant on the receipt of his letter, were sad and depressed. I felt like anything rather than rejoicing at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly, and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people ever fought."

In his conclusion, Grant put together his thoughts about the whole Civil War. He wrote: "Our republican institutions were regarded as experiments up to the breaking out of the rebellion, and monarchical Europe generally believed that our republic was a rope of sand that would part the moment the slightest strain was brought upon it. Now it has shown itself capable of dealing with one of the greatest wars that was ever made."

He was born Hiram Ulysses Grant on April 27, 1822, not in a log cabin like many of the other 19th century Presidents, but in a two-room frame house at Point Pleasant, Ohio. His father Jesse was a talkative tanner, and Son Ulysses, nicknamed "Useless," liked best to break and train colts. However, he hated the sight of blood and would not hunt.

When Jesse Grant wrote his congressman to apply for Ulysses at West Point, Ulysses first said, "I won't go." After Jesse talked some more, pointing out that his son *would* go, Ulysses conceded, "I thought so, too, if he did."

Ulysses even entered West Point with the wrong name: his sponsoring Congressman, Thomas L. Hamer, filled out the entry form "Ulysses Simpson Grant," apparently because Grant's mother's maiden name was Simpson. But the initials now read U.S. Grant, and the boy liked that fine. The new nicknames were "Uncle Sam," and then, at last, "Sam."

Cadet Sam Grant graduated 21st out of 39 in the class of 1843, and was remembered as a supreme young horseman whose record set for the equestrian high jump would stand at the Point for 25 years. Lieutenant Sam Grant fought for Zachary Taylor at Monterrey, where he rode through enemy lines for ammunition, and for Winfield Scott at Contreras. Grant made a fine young officer's mark when his detachment somehow manhandled a light howitzer right up into a church belfry at San Cosme and laid down supporting fire.

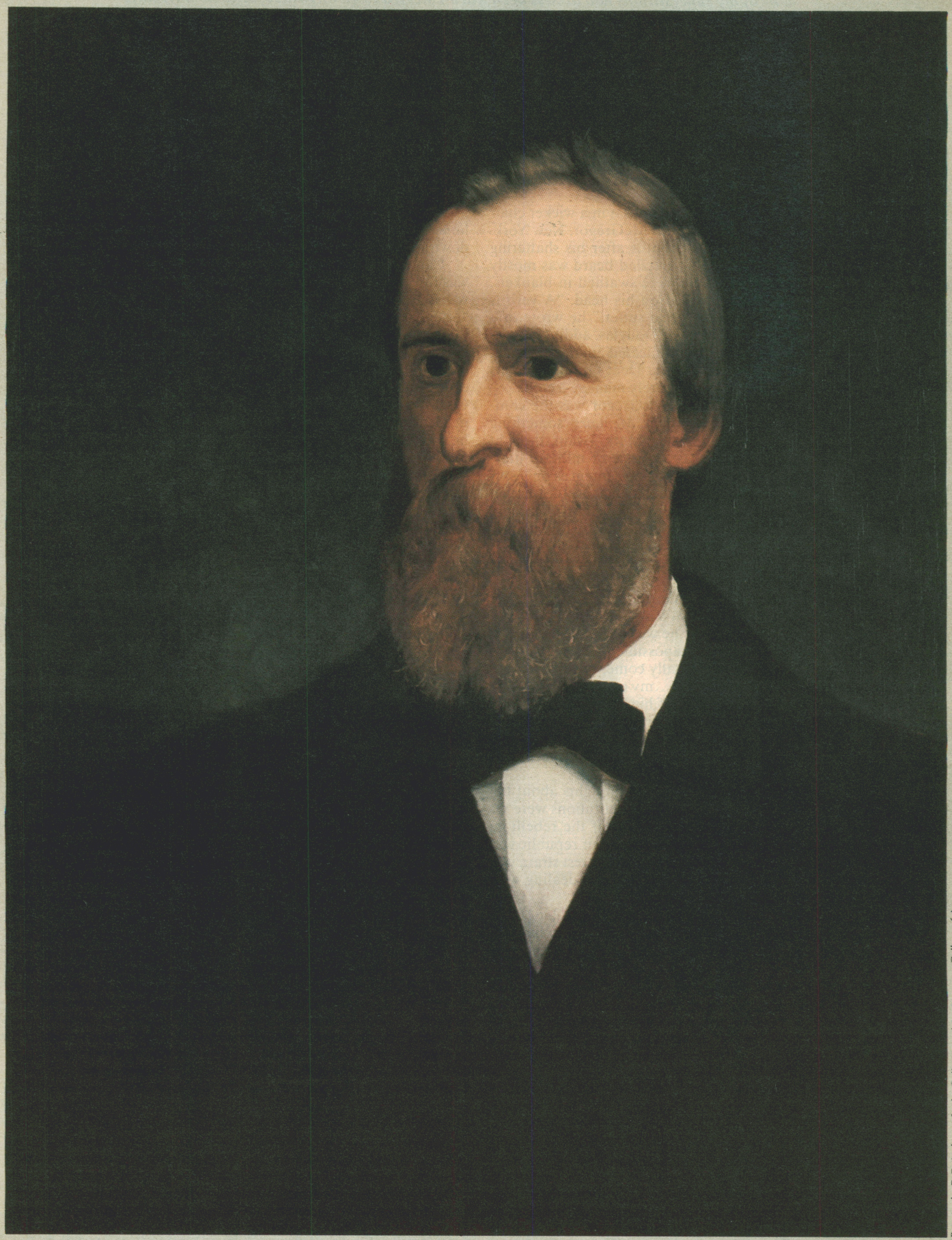
Captain Sam Grant, in one of his life's swooping downfalls, was forced to resign his commission in 1854 for drunkenness. "It was not that Grant drank much," a friend explained, adding that "on far less liquor than many a comrade carried without a sign, Grant would appear half stupefied." Next, Grant was unable to make a go at farming or as a real estate agent. Finally, he was reduced to working as a clerk in his father's leather shop at Galena, Illinois. But suddenly his life turned back up again as the Civil War broke out and men with West Point training were needed to serve as officers in the huge new armies. In June 1861, he was appointed colonel of the 21st Illinois Volunteers and two months after that he was a brigadier general of volunteers.

General Grant's military reputation as a plodding, remorseless butcher has overshadowed his daring penetrations, encirclements and flanking movements. While Lee and Stonewall Jackson were rapiering their virtuoso defense of northern Virginia, Grant was master-planning the gobbling up of whole armies in the West. Grant captured at Fort Donelson the largest force to surrender in America until then. At Shiloh, he fought off a devastating surprise attack. On Independence Day 1863, Grant took the fortified city of Vicksburg on the Mississippi, and President Lincoln was able to say that "the Father of Waters again goes unvexed to the sea." Grant was criticized for his heavy losses but Lincoln said, "I can't spare this man—he fights." Grant was also criticized for his drinking, but Lincoln suggested that Grant's brand of whisky should be passed around to the other generals. In November, Grant and the Virginia Unionist General George Thomas won the battle of Chattanooga.

Lieutenant General Sam Grant, as commander in chief of all the Union armies, directed the concerted slicing-up offensives that destroyed the Confederacy in 1864 and 1865. But first, in destiny's encounter in Virginia, he had to go up against Bobby Lee. At the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Court House, North Anna and Cold Harbor battles, Lee, the superior tactician, won successes—but lost in the campaign of attrition. Grant swung southward clear of Lee, secretly brought his whole army across the James River to attack Petersburg. This brought on the famous nine-month siege. Gradually, the outnumbered Confederates everywhere were being worn down. Sherman took Atlanta and marched to the sea. Sheridan put the torch to the Shenandoah Valley. On April 9, 1865, after storming the defenses of Petersburg and powering an American blitzkrieg pursuit, Grant accepted Lee's surrender at Appomattox Court House.

From Appomattox to the *Memoirs* at Mount McGregor, through two terms as President, Grant's life headed rapidly downhill. "Let us have peace," he said, but radical Republicans said, "Vote as you shot." Cherishing the naive concept of the President as mere administrator, he was overrun by Congress and engulfed by massive corruption in his official family. His verdict: "I never wanted to get out of a place as much as I did to get out of the Presidency." Five years later, after a regal tour around the world and a deadlocked run for a third term, he became a partner in a New York brokerage house. Hopelessly inexperienced, he was savagely swindled, and left insolvent.

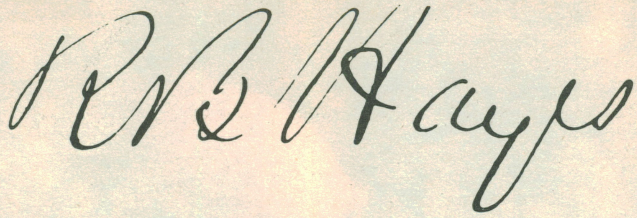
On July 23, 1885, at Mount McGregor, less than one week after finishing his *Memoirs*, General Grant died. The book netted $450,000 for his family, enshrining also his indomitable belief that in America you won, you lost, and you kept on moving ahead.



Painting by E. F. Andrews: In the Collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art

Rutherford B. Hayes (1877-1881)

I shall show a grit that will astonish those who predict weakness.



Nothing in his Presidency so ill became him as the winning of it. For Rutherford Hayes was a decent man, a gentle man and a bit of a bibliophile. Although historians have upgraded him in their ranking of Presidents, the stigma of his election "stolen" from the Democrats' Samuel J. Tilden still clouds the memory of him, obscuring the very real accomplishments of his Administration. He restored the South to the Union by withdrawing Federal troops from the last Southern states, while simultaneously trying to implement the 15th Amendment, which bestowed voting rights on the newly freed Negroes. He reinstituted "hard money." He proposed dismantling the spoils system at a time when many Republicans were avid for spoils and had got them in full measure from the Grant Administration. "He serves his party best who serves the country best," he said.

With a childhood as neurotic as his, he should have developed a more interesting personality—or at any rate, a more eccentric one. His father was a Vermont storekeeper who decided to "go West" in 1817 to make his fortune—by farming and distilling whisky. He settled in Delaware, Ohio, where he was carried off by a fever ten weeks before young Rutherford was born in 1822. The little boy grew up under the focused attention of his mother and his older sister, an all-feminine concentration so intense as to lead him into a condition described as "nervousness almost to the point of disaster." With the essential help of an uncle who had prospered, Rutherford got about as good an education as anybody could in those days, attending private school, then Kenyon College, finally finishing at Harvard Law School. He returned to Ohio as a highly trained lawyer but refused to set up practice in Columbus, where his now married sister lived; he found the town of Fremont a wiser choice. There is no question that his relation to his sister Fanny was of Freudian intensity; he had even refused to attend her wedding but they exchanged passionate letters. (She wrote that he was "daily the object of my waking thoughts and almost nightly of my dreams.") When Fanny died after childbirth, Hayes told Lucy, his bride of four years: "You are sister Fanny to me now"—a remark she must have received with mixed feelings. Still, Lucy Ware Webb gave him a daughter and seven sons in a marriage that seems to have been remarkably successful.

Nine years younger than Hayes, Lucy was well educated: she was the first college graduate to be a President's wife. Even though, as a strict Methodist, she banned the serving of wine in the White House ("the water flowed like wine," observed one disgruntled Cabinet officer), "Lemonade Lucy" was a woman of sprightly charm. In fact, the Hayes' probably entertained as extravagantly as any other Presidential couple before their time, with receptions attended not only by officials but also literary figures and intellectuals. Thomas Edison came to demonstrate his phonograph, lingering on until after 3 a.m. Thomas Eakins received his first real commission to paint Hayes' portrait. On private occasions, Hayes was conspicuously informal, favoring an old slouch hat and a black alpaca coat. Even when he was President, he loved to travel incognito, sitting next to strangers on passenger trains to listen to or join in informal conversations.

Hayes did not exactly skyrocket to success. He moved to Cincinnati in 1849, built a reputation as a criminal lawyer, was elected city solicitor and was quick to volunteer in the Union Army. There he served gallantly for four years, was wounded five times and emerged as a brevet major general. While still in the Army and just before the war's end, he was elected to Congress. He did not much like Congress, and when, in 1867, Ohio Republicans nominated him for Governor, he jumped at the chance. His first order of business as Ohio's new Governor was to urge Negro voting rights, a project in which he failed. For the rest, his record was impeccable: he improved conditions in state prisons, acquired a large collection of historical manuscripts for the state library, founded the agricultural college that became Ohio State University. He was re-elected once, then "retired" to devote himself to law and business interests so successfully that he ended up as probably the richest President of the 19th century.

When the Republicans needed a gubernatorial candidate for 1875, he acceded, knowing full well it might lead to the Presidency. The prospect did not intimidate him. He wrote in his diary: "It seems to me that good purposes and the judgment, experience, and firmness I possess, would enable me to execute the duties of the office well." In the Republican Convention, the leading candidate was Maine's charismatic Senator James G. Blaine. But Blaine had had questionable dealings in stocks and railroads, and on the seventh ballot, Hayes overtook him. Hayes promised to serve only one term, then promptly announced his program: an end to the spoils system, a resumption of specie payments for greenbacks and "a civil policy which will wipe out forever the distinction between North and South in our common country." His Democratic opponent was the upright Governor of New York, Samuel J. Tilden.

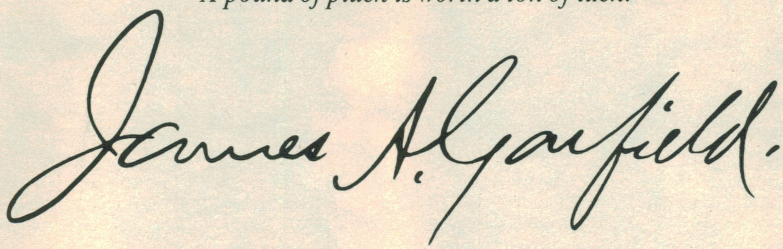
The result was the most extraordinary election in U.S. history. On election night, Hayes went to bed thinking he had lost. Tilden had taken a lead in the popular vote, which eventually amounted to about 250,000. But if the Republicans could hold the electoral votes of Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina, along with Oregon, Tilden would have only 184 electoral votes—one short of what he needed. Tilden apparently had popular majorities in all three Southern states, but Republican carpetbaggers and Negroes controlled the three governments with the help of federal troops. Their electoral boards promptly turned up evidence of fraud and intimidation of Negro voters by white Democrats (though there was enough corruption to go around on both sides). Congress appointed a commission consisting of five Senators, five Congressmen and five Justices of the Supreme Court. The wheeling and dealing that went on for the next four months was of staggering complexity. In fairness to Hayes, he seems to have taken no part in it, but it is impossible to believe he was unaware of it. In any event, the commission decided each disputed state for the Republicans by a strict party line 8-to-7 vote. Thus Hayes became President by an electoral vote of 185 to 184.

Hayes promptly set about making good on his promises. He withdrew the federal troops upholding the last carpetbag regimes in the South. He was less successful in protecting equal voting rights for the South's liberated Negroes—but he tried. He proposed the institution of examinations for Government posts, and stipulated that civil servants should not make political contributions as the price for their jobs. When railroad workers struck to protest another cut in their wages, Hayes dealt firmly but with restraint to curb the subsequent rioting, sending in federal troops to restore order in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Illinois, but only at the request of the respective Governors. Hayes even-handedly held the owners as much to blame as the strikers, whom he described "as a rule...good men, sober, intelligent, and industrious." As a result, many of the railroads rescinded the wage cuts. His term done and true to his promise, Rutherford B. Hayes refused renomination and retired to his acres and his books in Ohio, saying with quiet but perhaps justifiable pride: "Nobody ever left the Presidency with less regret, less disappointment, fewer heartburnings, or any general content with the result of his term (in his own heart, I mean) than I do."

Painting by Wyatt Eaton. Union League Club of New York

James A. Garfield (March 4 - September 19, 1881)

A pound of pluck is worth a ton of luck.



"Fellow citizens!" cried the young Ohio Congressman in a powerful voice that stilled the angry mob. "God reigns, and the Government at Washington still lives!" The day was April 15, 1865, and the riotous horde had sought vengeance for the death of Abraham Lincoln. Sixteen years later, on July 2, 1881, Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln, son of Abraham, dispatched troops to reinforce the Washington jail and protect the assassin of the Ohioan—now President James A. Garfield—from an avenging throng.

On July 4 James Abram Garfield's mother, in failing health, was told that the President, who had taken office only four months before, had been shot but clung to life. She inquired of a reporter: "How could anybody be so coldhearted as to want to kill my baby?" She had raised him alone after her husband, a worker on the Ohio Canal and pioneer farmer, died, leaving Eliza Garfield with four young children in a log cabin in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, in the forests of the Western Reserve. (As the last of the log-cabin Presidents, Garfield called it a "politically perfect mansion.") Young Garfield was very close to his mother—she later went with him to the White House and lived there briefly—and it was she who instilled a passion for knowledge, particularly biblical, that he carried throughout his life.

The broad-shouldered youth, who would become a handsome, athletic-looking, 6-ft.-tall man, spent much of his adolescence cutting wood, planting and reaping, and going to school whenever time allowed. At 16, though, he left the farm to work on the canal, remarking years later that "the best thing that can happen to a young man is to be tossed overboard and compelled to sink or swim for himself. In all my acquaintance, I never knew a man to be drowned who was worth the saving." After six weeks he was home again, having licked a deck-hand bully, contracted malaria—and fallen into the drink 14 times.

Garfield's boundless enthusiasm for learning, religious or otherwise, took him to the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute, operated by the Disciples of Christ, a fundamentalist sect. He preached for the Disciples on Sundays, developed an evangelical style of oratory and moved toward the ministry. Transferring to Williams College, he studied classical subjects and at 26 was back at the institute to teach Latin, Greek, history and philosophy and, finally, to become its president. In later years Garfield salted his political speeches with snippets of a Ralph Waldo Emerson commencement address he had virtually memorized at Williams. He also amused himself during dull moments of congressional debate by translating the odes of Horatio, and amazed friends by simultaneously writing Latin with one hand and Greek with the other (he was the country's first lefthanded President).

Garfield called himself a "very pulpy boy," but the pulp of a sentimental youth soon hardened into the firm fiber of a volunteer commander in the Civil War. He "simply took people by storm," remarked his wife Lucretia. In 1863, when President Lincoln suggested that generals were easier to come by than Administration-Republican Congressmen, Major General Garfield, chief of staff under General William Rosecrans and one of the few officers to whom the North could point with pride after the Battle of Chickamauga, reluctantly accepted a House seat. He was returned eight times, and when ferocious old Thaddeus Stevens died, the Republican leadership fell to Garfield, probably the best-read man in the House, and James G. Blaine of Maine.

But Washington of the 1870s—not unlike Washington of the 1970s—was smeared by scandal, and Congressman Garfield was accused of accepting a $329 dividend from the tainted Crédit Mobilier, a charge he denied. Later he accepted a $5,000 legal fee from a company seeking a paving contract in the capital, but insisted that he performed no legislative services for the money. Although General Winfield Scott Hancock, the Democratic nominee for President, brought them up, the campaign of 1880 did not center on the scandals. Instead, the main issue was reform of civil service, and had it not been for the divisiveness of the question, Garfield might never have been on the Republican ticket.

The convention split among the "Stalwarts" of the New York boss, Senator Roscoe Conkling, the "Half-Breeds" of Blaine, and the friends (including Garfield) of Secretary of the Treasury John Sherman. The Stalwarts favored the spoils system and a third term for Ulysses S. Grant. The Half-Breeds urged reform and the candidacy of Blaine. But when, to break the deadlock, Sherman released his delegates to Garfield, Blaine's went along, and the moderate Ohioan became the compromise nominee on the 36th ballot. A pleased President Hayes called Garfield "the best that was possible," an "ideal self-made man."

Elected by the slimmest of margins (9,464 votes out of 9 million cast), the new President found himself besieged by avid job hunters. It was with grim prescience that he irritably described "the indurated office seeker who pursues his prey with the grip of death." For it was just such an office seeker—Charles J. Guiteau—who assassinated President James A. Garfield.

Guiteau, disappointed in his quest for a job, stalked his intended victim for several days before the shooting: he tailed Garfield to the train station, but was touched by the sight of the President with his frail wife; he followed him to church, but feared injuring innocent people; he waited in Lafayette Park, facing the White House, night after night, but Garfield never emerged.

The President felt that assassination could "no more be guarded against than death by lightning." On the night of June 30, however, Garfield, with Guiteau probably in ambush across the street, had a strangely ominous conversation with Robert Todd Lincoln. For more than an hour the two sat in the White House discussing in painful detail the assassination of the Secretary of War's father. Perhaps they even recalled Lincoln's dream: hearing weeping in the White House, seeing a coffin, asking a soldier who lay within—and receiving the reply, "The President."

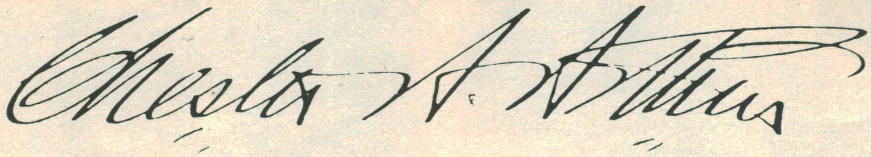
Garfield was preparing to board a train for commencement at his alma mater, Williams College, when two shots were fired, the first grazing his arm, the other lodging in his back. For 80 summer days the President sweltered and suffered on the edge of death. His only official act was to sign an extradition paper, and he was obviously unable to perform the duties of his office. For the first time there arose that vital question, to which the Constitution provided no clear answer: What happens in the event of Presidental disability? No solution was to come until 1967 with the ratification of the 25th Amendment.

For James Garfield, the end came on Sept. 19, 1881. The end for his convicted assassin, Charles Guiteau, was by hanging on June 30, 1882—one year to the day after Garfield's melancholy talk with Robert Todd Lincoln.

Painting by Daniel Huntington: White House Collection

Chester A. Arthur (1881-1885)

Men may die, but the fabrics of our free institutions remain unshaken.



"Arthur is about the last man who would be considered eligible to that position," wrote the New York *Times* about the Vice President the morning after the murderous assault on President James Garfield. A friend of the Vice President's later recalled, "It was a common saying of that time among those who knew him best, 'Chet' Arthur President of the United States. Good God!" But Governor Charles Foster of Ohio disagreed. Also on the morning after the shots that led to Garfield's lingering death, he predicted: "The people and the politicians will find that Vice President Arthur and President Arthur are different men."

During the long, hushed summer of 1881, from July 2 when Garfield was shot until September 19 when Garfield died, the Vice President comported himself perfectly. Although famed as a New York City spoilsman, with his share of excessive ambition, Chet Arthur made not a move to assume any of the powers of the President who lay stricken. Although celebrated as a bon vivant with aldermanic girth and with his share of excessive camaraderie, Chet Arthur became a sad, silent, figure in the national tragedy. He took solace in a letter from a woman he had never met: "Great emergencies awaken generous traits which have lain dormant half a life," the Vice President read. "If there is a spark of true nobility in you, now is the occasion to let it shine."

Chester Alan (pronounced Alyn) Arthur did indeed have more than his share of true nobility—little-recognized then or since—and he proved himself qualified for high office during the years between the active Presidencies. Born Oct. 5, 1829 in a log cabin in Fairfield, Vt., he was the son of a Free Will Baptist preacher, teacher and journeyman intellectual, the remarkable "Elder" William Arthur. An able and intelligent student, young Arthur co-edited his school newspaper, contributed some Whiggish support for Senator Clay, tangled with other youngsters who objected. At Union College, Schenectady, he was influenced by his father, who read Latin, Hebrew and Greek, to opt for a classical curriculum. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa.

One of young Arthur's more reflective papers (a less reflective one was entitled "A brief Universal history from the Deluge to the present time") focused on the institution of slavery. "Labor being performed chiefly by slaves," he wrote, "...the atmosphere almost becomes tainted with the paralyzing opinion that labor is disgraceful." As a young lawyer in New York City, he zeroed in on a very modern issue indeed. Representing a black woman teacher who had been shoved about by a streetcar conductor after boarding a Third Avenue streetcar reserved for whites, Arthur won for his client $225 in damages, plus costs. Not long afterward, all New York City streetcar companies integrated their transportation facilities.

As a rapidly rising young lawyer, Arthur worked visibly and effectively for the brand-new Republican Party. He served as an inspector of elections and on the executive committee of the Eighteenth Ward Young Men's Fremont Vigilance Committee. Thurlow Weed brought Arthur to the attention of Republican Governor Edwin D. Morgan who appointed Arthur an "engineer-in-chief" on the governor's staff. This was an unpaid social role, something akin to being a Kentucky Colonel, and Arthur, who was a member of the state militia, was expected to don military finery and escort the governor on state occasions.

But the year was 1861 and suddenly, amid Civil War, this political plum was transformed into a difficult military mission. At the age of 31, Arthur found himself a very real engineer-in-chief, with the rank of brigadier general, representing the Quartermaster-General of the Union Army in New York City. Almost engulfed by scores of thousands of volunteers, Arthur assisted in the feeding, billeting, uniforming and equipping, and he did the job thoroughly and well. But two years later, the Democrats won the New York governorship and General Arthur was out of his job. He speng the rest of the war, not at the front, but handling war claims.

After the war, he rose like a rocket in the Republican Party. A lawyer whose clients included Dun (of what is now Dun & Bradstreet) and Tiffany (then at Union Square), Arthur became chairman of the New York State Republican executive committee and the Central Grant Club of New York City. Soon a protégé of New York's Senator Roscoe Conkling, he helped win elections and distribute the spoils. In November 1871, he was appointed by President Grant to serve as collector at the New York Customhouse, where he collected some 75% of the nation's customs revenue, managed a staff of more than 1,000 politically appointed people, and rolled up a personal income in excess of $50,000 a year. In July 1878, with the Customhouse the target of President Hayes's reform investigations, Collector Arthur was suspended, although he was never charged with any offense.

In June 1880, at the Republican national convention in Chicago, Chet Arthur made the decision of his life. Although he had worked with his fellow Stalwarts for a third term for General Grant, he was offered the slot as General Garfield's running mate. Nominee Garfield, a moderate, needed Stalwart support. Chet Arthur needed rehabilitation after the onslaught of President Hayes. "The Ohio men have offered me the Vice Presidency," said Arthur to his mentor, Roscoe Conkling. "Well, sir," said Conkling, loyal to Grant, "you should drop it as you would a red hot shoe from the forge." After some more conversation, Arthur said, "The office of the Vice President is a greater honor than I ever dreamed of attaining... In a calmer moment, you will look at this differently."

At 2:15 a.m., Sept. 20, 1881, not long after receipt of the news of President Garfield's death, Chester Arthur took the oath of office behind the closed green blinds of his home at 123 Lexington Avenue in Manhattan. "The gloom and anxiety which have enshrouded the country must make repose especially welcome now," he said in his inaugural address two days later, adding, "No demand for speedy legislation has been heard; no adequate occasion is apparent for an unusual session of Congress."

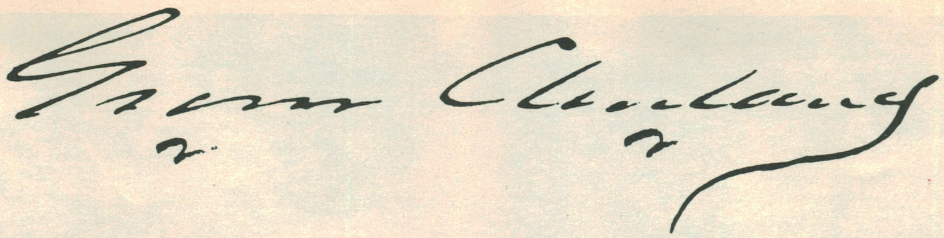
President Arthur went on to lead the U.S. through more than three years of such repose of which the New York *World* would comment: "No duty was neglected... There was no scandal to make us ashamed." He modernized the Navy, worked for lower tariffs, vetoed a pork-barrel rivers and harbors bill and was overridden. His headline achievement, a miracle in the light of his spoilsman's past, was his signature in January 1883 on the Pendleton Act that created the Civil Service Commission. Roscoe Conkling, forever the unreconstructed, used to call it "the snivel service." President Arthur also seemed to set a style for the nation as he moved about, with his kindly eyes, his genial smile, his trimmed burnsides, his Prince Albert coat, "the beau ideal," as one friend commented, "of the American citizen." The title of a recent biography by Thomas C. Reeves aptly characterizes him: *Gentleman Boss.*

President Arthur led the national celebrations of great moments of the 1880s: the centennial of Yorktown, the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge, the dedication of the Washington National Monument. There were private moments: Widower Arthur placing flowers beside the picture of his wife, who had died of pneumonia at the age of 42, the President who knew he could not run again because he had Bright's disease. On Nov. 18, 1886, he died, not two years out of the White House to which he had brought not only continuity but dignity.

Painting by Eastman Johnson: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C

Grover Cleveland (1885-1889, 1893-1897)

What is the use of being elected or re-elected unless you stand for something?



When the Democrats nominated Grover Cleveland for the Presidency in 1884, he seemed too good to be true. Brutally honest, hard-working, unyielding on points of principle, he had a reputation as a public servant that was pure gold. But when the Republicans dug into his private life they discovered one tarnished nugget—in the form of a nine-year-old illegitimate son. When his campaign managers asked Cleveland what they should tell the press, his reply was so typical of the man that it has gone down in history as one of those verbal flares that suddenly illuminate the soul of the speaker. He said, "Tell the truth."

The fifth of nine children born to a Presbyterian minister, Grover Cleveland spent most of his early life in the predictable, orderly universe of a rural New York parsonage. His father, locally renowned for his incessant industry and devotion to duty, died when "Grove" was 16. Forced to make his own way, Cleveland decided to go West. He was headed off in Buffalo by an uncle who encouraged him to apprentice at a local law firm.

In 1859 Cleveland was admitted to the Buffalo bar, and at about the same time he began to get involved in Democratic Party politics. He served briefly as a ward supervisor and soon after as an assistant district attorney. In 1870 he was elected county sheriff and served an energetic three-year term. When he returned to private law practice, his reputation for integrity and determination brought him many important corporate clients, and eventually, the Democratic nomination for mayor.

Even by the loose standards of 1880, Buffalo was a corrupt city, run by a small clique of men from both parties who for years had been skimming money off the top of virtually every municipal expenditure. Reform Democrats sensed a rising tide of popular disgust and turned to the former sheriff, honest lawyer and loyal party worker. Cleveland routed the opposition and immediately set the tone for the rest of his public life. Armed with his veto power and burly indignation, he took on the city's worst grafters, making headlines by saving the city more than $1 million on sewer construction and street-cleaning contracts.

What the people of Buffalo liked, the people of the rest of the state loved. And just one year after becoming the "Veto Mayor" of that city, he became the "Veto Governor" of New York. To statewide corruption, Cleveland applied the same general nostrum that worked in Buffalo: his simple pugnacious honesty, expressed in the form of bluntly worded vetoes, blocking the pet schemes of Republicans and Democrats alike.

Governor Cleveland made enemies by the hundreds, friends by the thousands. By preventing patronage appointments in the Buffalo fire department, for example, he was said to have turned the Democratic hierarchy there into "one white-hot, hissing globule of rage." But in the same editorial, the Albany *Evening Journal* continued: "Grover Cleveland has shown himself what we took him on trust to be last fall—bigger and better than his party." His very indifference to political considerations lay at the heart of his greatest political successes. In fact, after his name was placed in nomination before the Democratic national convention the following year, one speaker cried, "We love him for the enemies he has made!" In the Presidential election, the voters agreed.

If politics is indeed the art of the possible, President Cleveland often seemed to be an impossible man, with little sense of diplomacy and no taste for compromise.

It has been said that little was accomplished during his first Administration. This was not so much a failure, however, as it was the natural outcome of his concept of the Presidency and the proper role of Government in American life. His ideas on both were largely negative. Government, he believed, should interfere as little as possible in the lives of citizens. He felt his own job was to stop current abuses and prevent new ones.

He fought long and hard to preserve the gold standard because he was convinced that "cheap" silver money was a delusion that would bring economic ruin. He attacked protective tariffs relentlessly because he believed they favored special business interests, and it was not the function of Government to dispense favors. He doubled the number of Government jobs protected by civil service laws because he saw that wholesale patronage was not an efficient way to run the Government. He vetoed a pension give-away for Civil War veterans because he considered it extravagant and politically motivated. None of these actions was universally popular. Some did him great political damage.

One of the few indisputably popular things Cleveland did during his Presidency was to marry his 21-year-old ward, Frances Folsom, daughter of his deceased Buffalo law partner. The grace and gentle beauty of the new First Lady cast a softer light on the stern image of the President. But even that was not enough to get him re-elected in 1888. Cleveland lost to the Republicans under Benjamin Harrison.

In 1892, however, he was nominated on the first ballot and won the election. The people were desperate. After four years of heavy Republican spending, the nation was foundering in its worst depression yet: hundreds of banks were failing, mortgages were being foreclosed, corporations were collapsing, the Treasury's gold reserve was dropping dangerously. Cleveland charged into the breach, summoning Congress into emergency session to repeal the Sherman Silver-Purchase Act. A three-month battle ensued, during which the President relied on his characteristic reserve of grit and the uncharacteristic maneuver of offering the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee all the patronage in his home state in return for his support. In the end the President won—all the more remarkable a victory when it was later discovered he had been operated on for cancer in the midst of the struggle (an operation Cleveland had concealed at the time to avoid adding one more fear to the panicky mood of the nation).

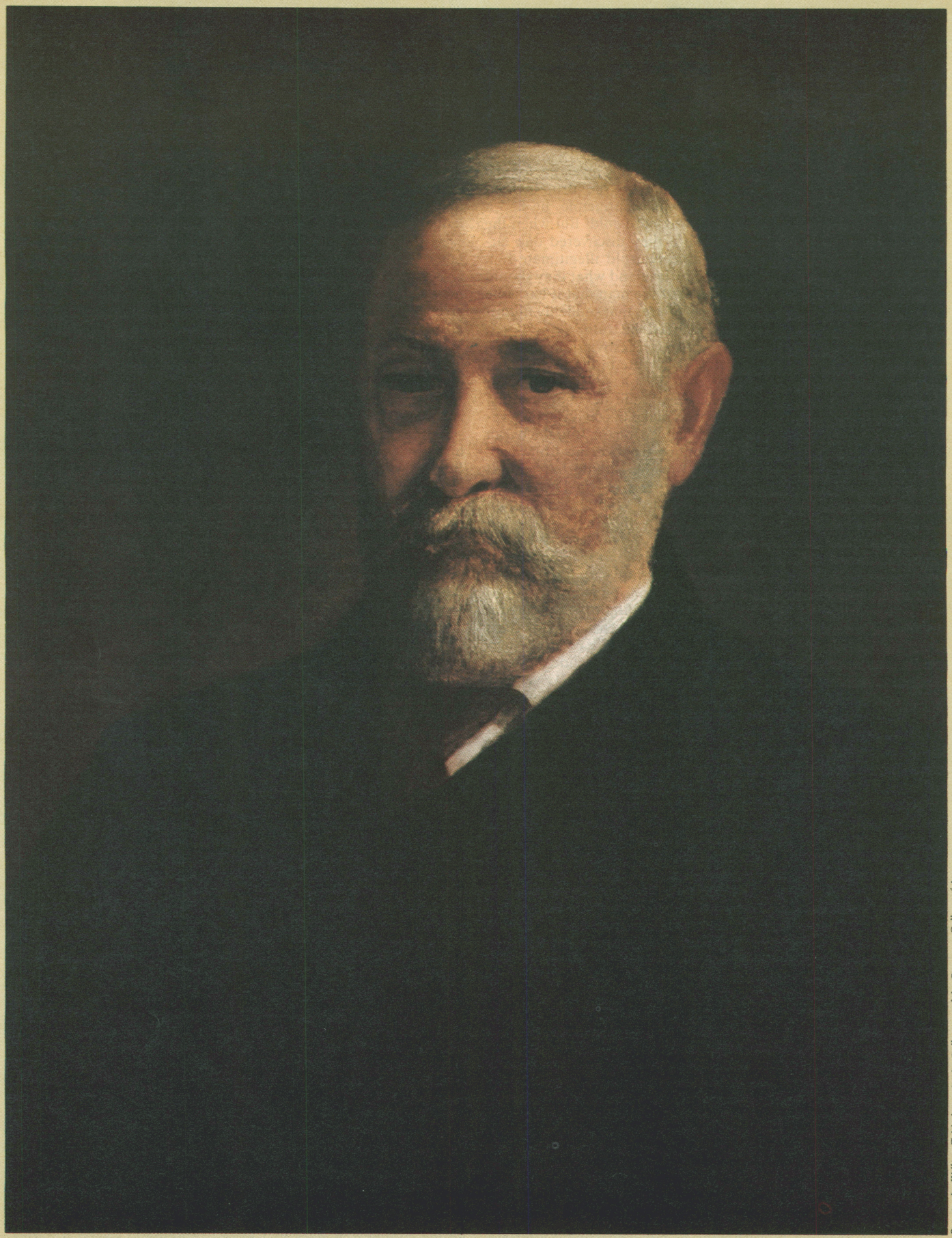
During his second term, Cleveland engineered two other major achievements. He invoked the Monroe Doctrine in a British dispute with Venezuela, and he turned back a popular move to annex Hawaii for the novel reason that we had no right to do so. These four years, however, were filled with more hard times than good times. The repeal of the Sherman Silver-Purchase Act was no panacea for America's economic troubles. Cleveland, at the end of his first term, had begun to see the shape of the real problem. "The gulf between employers and the employed is constantly widening," he noted, "and classes are rapidly forming."

To keep the country from going bankrupt, he was forced to make an unpopular deal with J.P. Morgan, in which the mighty banker agreed to loan the U.S. $65 million in gold and stop the flow of gold out of the country for a specified amount of time.

During the same period, Cleveland's heavy-handed response to labor unrest—using police and soldiers to violently disperse demonstrators—brought his popularity to an all-time low, while his endless and bitter fight against tariffs earned him the title "His Obstinacy." In 1896 the Democrats nominated Cleveland's archrival, William Jennings Bryan. Overshadowed by Bryan's monumental eloquence, Cleveland faded quietly out of office.

In time his reputation revived. By the time he died at the age of 71, he was revered by many Americans as the greatest President since Lincoln; and many shared the sentiments of Samuel Tilden when he exclaimed, "Backbone! He has so much that it makes his stomach stick out in front."

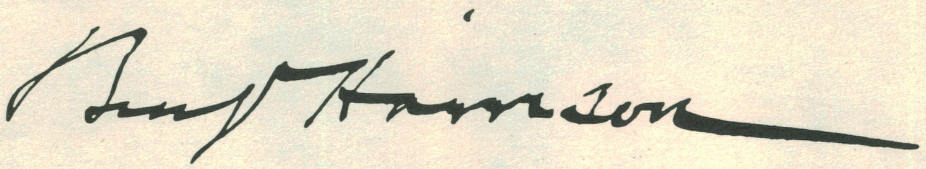
Perhaps Grover Cleveland was too simple a man to deal with all the complex changes that were beginning to sweep America. Perhaps he was too stubborn a fellow. But there can be no quibbling with his own dying words: "I have tried so hard to do right."



Painting by William T. Mathews. In the Collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art

Benjamin Harrison (1889-1893)

Well, my life is about as barren of anything funny as the Great Desert is of grass.



He possessed neither the gift of inspired language nor the warmth of person that suggest political promise. He was, said a colleague, "as glacial as a Siberian stripped of his furs." But Benjamin Harrison had a singular Presidential asset—his family name. It was an old and honored one.

Grandson of "Old Tippecanoe," President William Henry Harrison, he was the sixth of a long family line to bear the name Benjamin. The previous five—from the Benjamin Harrison who came to Virginia within 25 years of the Jamestown settlement, to the owner of Berkeley Plantation who signed the Declaration of Independence—had been men of public spirit, education, integrity and relative wealth. President Benjamin Harrison continued the family tradition.

Born in 1833 on his grandfather's estate in North Bend, Ohio, he absorbed from his parents the strict doctrines of the Presbyterian Church. Having seen politics firsthand, the elder Harrison, a two-time Congressman, advised his son to avoid its "many inducements to stray from the proper path."

For a while, the advice appeared to be well-heeded; the pulpit seemed a more likely objective than the political stump. Strictly temperate and remarkably industrious, Benjamin's principal self-indulgence was an affinity for a long cigar. At Ohio's church-run Miami University, he met his future wife, Caroline Lavinia Scott, a minister's daughter, and spent so much time on the front porch courting her that his classmates tagged him the "pious moonlight dude." Once when the two were left alone, though, they scandalously took off on a buggy ride and ended up at a dance. She was fun-loving and danced to her heart's delight; his strict morality usually outlawed such diversions.

But politics was in his blood. He trained for the legal profession, started a partnership in Indianapolis, joined the Republican Party and ran successfully for city attorney in 1857. After returning from the Civil War (he was a stern commander, fought in Sherman's Atlanta campaign and retired a brigadier general), Harrison concentrated on building a statewide reputation and a lucrative law practice. He achieved both.

Nevertheless, said a neighbor, "I do not think he ever had an acquaintance with anyone that ripened into the hottest kind of friendship," and it was his reputation as an "iceberg" that lost him the Governorship in 1876 to a colorful character named James ("Blue Jeans") Williams. Four years later, however, the Republican legislature sent Harrison to the U.S. Senate. There, as a clean politician, he was thrust onto the national stage as a possible Republican Presidential nominee in 1888. When the powerful "Plumed Knight" of Maine, James G. Blaine, threw his support to Harrison, his nomination was assured.

The campaign was dull. President Cleveland did not campaign, nor would he let the Cabinet. Harrison stayed close to the front porch while such men as John Wanamaker, the "Merchant Prince" of Philadelphia, fed the party coffers. Wanamaker, it is said, raised $100,000 in ten minutes, at least $1 million in all, and rumor had it that he had another $2 million in reserve. "We raised the money so quickly that the Democrats never knew anything about it," said Wanamaker. Although Harrison lost the popular battle, there was sufficient money to win the Electoral College war: some timely vote buying in Indiana and a cagey deal with Tammany Hall in New York swung those states to the Republican side.

"Providence," said the naive President, "has given us this victory." Hardly. "He ought to know," said Republican National Committee Chairman Matt Quay, "that providence hadn't a damn thing to do with it." Realization finally came—the hard way. "When I came into power, I found that the party managers had taken it all to themselves," Harrison said later. "I could not name my own Cabinet. They had sold out every place to pay the election expenses."

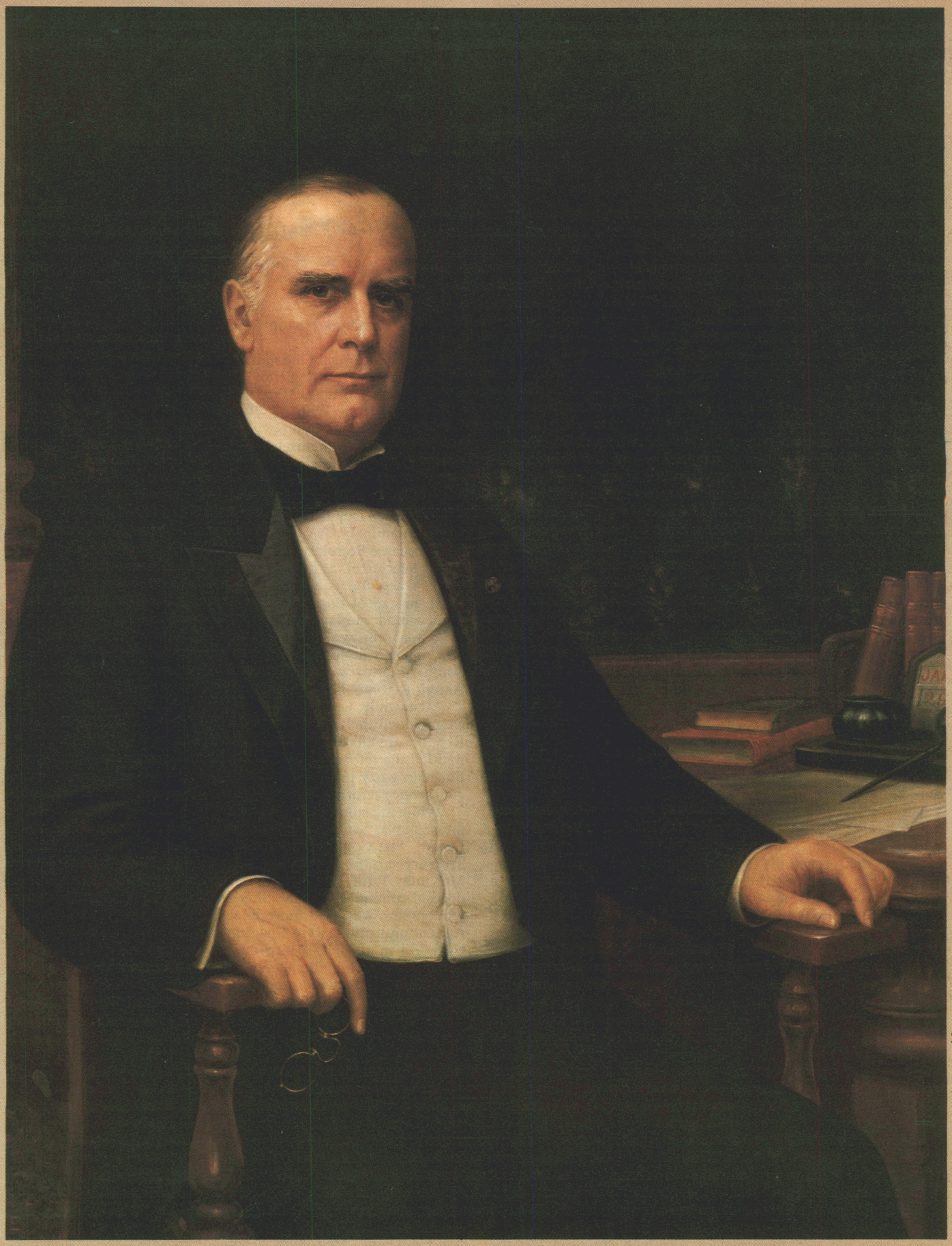
The Merchant Prince was named Postmaster General (he removed 30,000 Democrats from the public payroll in his first year), and Benjamin F. Tracy, a friend of New York's boss Thomas Platt, became Secretary of the Navy. Tracy's appointment proved highly successful, as did that of James G. Blaine as Secretary of State. Tracy understood that business was leading the world toward an age of imperialism, and that the U.S. would have to build a modern Navy and expand the merchant marine in order to compete for world trade. Blaine, with Harrison's hand guiding him, opened diplomatic and commercial doors to Central and South America with the advent of the International Union of American Republics, later the Pan American Union.

Meanwhile, Civil Service Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt championed the merit system and assured that "Democrats and Republicans alike will have fair play." Harrison was caught in the middle: the reform-minded Mugwumps who had bolted the Republican party in 1884, criticized him for violating the spirit of civil service reform; the spoilsmen, for following it too closely.

While the stocky (5 ft. 6 in.), gray-bearded President (he once dressed up as Santa Claus), wrangled with the bosses, the "Billion Dollar" 51st Congress and the 52nd that followed dried up the Treasury surplus with pension increases of more than 50%. The McKinley Tariff, passed in 1890, worked to the benefit of the industrial combines, and the Sherman Antitrust Act, aimed at the monopolies, was used more effectively against organized labor. Agricultural prices were low, and farmers vowed to "raise less corn and more hell." Harrison passively went along. He later shouldered much of the blame for the panic of 1893.

Harrison played an important role, however, in the admission of six states (more than any other President), and in the settlement of the Oklahoma territory. Responding to petitions by lumbering, mining and real estate interests, Harrison set noon, April 22, 1889, as the opening hour. The Sooners, most of them well armed, answered the bugle blast with a wild rush over the border. Upwards of 50,000 entered the territory, made their claims and set up temporary governments.

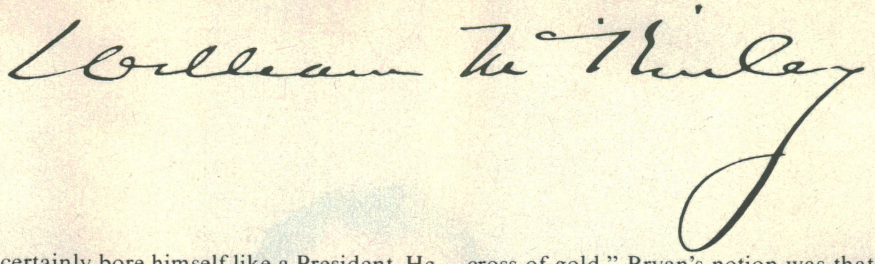
President Benjamin Harrison approached the 1892 election with reluctance. The remote style, the coldly dignified approach to politics that denied him public popularity, the bickering party that blamed him for so much, all made him want to return to his law practice in Indiana; the Harrison pride made him try for re-election. "No Harrison has ever retreated in the presence of a foe without giving battle," said he, "and so I have determined to stand and fight." He fought, in spite of his wife's death two weeks before the election, and lost—to Grover Cleveland, the man he had defeated four years earlier.



Painting by Harry See. New-York Historical Society

William McKinley (1897-September 14, 1901)

I have never been in doubt since I was old enough to think intelligently that I would sometime be made President.



William McKinley certainly bore himself like a President. He carried his sturdy body ramrod straight, his beaked nose and tufted eyebrows suggested command, and he even got himself called "Napoleon" for his habit of thrusting one hand inside his coat when he spoke. He often wore an immaculate white vest, changing it several times a day, and there was always a red carnation in his buttonhole. Some critics found him pompous. A young Kansas journalist named William Allen White wrote, "He walked among men like a bronze statue...determinedly looking for his pedestal." Others noted that he was little learned in history or economics, and seldom read a book. But almost everyone agreed that he was a nice fellow, invariably courteous, generally tolerant of an opponent's view and always willing to make himself accessible in his office—he habitually met visitors at the door, listened to them patiently, often sent them away with a red carnation off his desk.

McKinley acquired for the U.S. an overseas empire, although it is far from certain that he really wanted to. He could have argued (and did) that he did not want war with Spain, and only Congress and an aroused public forced him into it. But even then he resisted as long as he dared and went to war only when he was sure he had overwhelming popular backing. As one irreverent Congressman remarked, McKinley had his ear so close to the ground that it was full of grasshoppers.

McKinley grew up deeply believing that what was good for U.S. business was good for the country. His father owned a small iron foundry in Niles, Ohio, where McKinley was born in the family quarters over a country store. His schooling was interrupted at 17 because family funds ran out. When the Civil War erupted, he enlisted, fought gallantly in several battles, and emerged as a brevet major. He resolved to study law and at 24 was a practicing lawyer in Canton, Ohio. Four days before his 28th birthday, he married Ida Saxton, daughter of the town's leading banker. The marriage proved a long tragedy. They lost one daughter in infancy, the other at age four. Overcome by shock and grief, Ida McKinley for the rest of her life was an invalid subject to convulsive seizures. She occupied herself chiefly by crocheting bedroom slippers, but also insisted on her role as her husband's hostess. He sat next to her at every social function, and, at the first sign of an attack, he quickly placed a napkin or handkerchief over her contorted face and helped her to another room. It happened many times, even at the White House.

In 1876, he won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives; with one brief interval, he stayed there for 14 years. There, he made his name by his espousal of the protective tariff, which, he argued, would protect not only U.S. industry but the wage scale of the workingman. "Let England take care of itself, let France look after her own interests, let Germany take care of her own people, but in God's name let Americans look after America!" he cried. The result was the 1890 tariff, which provided the highest rates in the nation's history up to that time.

The voters did not wholly admire the tariff or its author—and McKinley lost his House seat. But industrialists did like it, notably one Mark Hanna, an Ohio tycoon with interests in banks, iron and shipping, among other things. The next year, financed lavishly by Hanna, McKinley ran for Governor and won. Hanna's next effort was to obtain the Republican Presidential nomination for McKinley, which he did on the first ballot with enormous amounts of money and effort in lining up delegates. Everything seemed under control until the Democratic Convention was swept away by the speech of William Jennings Bryan, who proclaimed: "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold." Bryan's notion was that the free coinage of silver would provide "cheap" dollars as a panacea for the masses.

McKinley and the Republicans cautiously supported maintenance of the gold standard, and McKinley also decided he could not match his rival's oratory. "I have to *think* when I speak," he told Hanna, and insisted he would stay home. But if McKinley would not go to the voters, Hanna could bring the voters to him. Crowds started swarming into Ohio, with Hanna organizing cut-rate excursions for delegates from all over the U.S., with bands on hand to meet them. Then McKinley would emerge onto the front porch of his house, talk of "sound money" and "an honest dollar," and deplore the "un-American attempt to array labor against capital... For the prosperity of the one is the prosperity of the other." McKinley defeated Bryan, 271 electoral votes to 176.

McKinley's first order of business was to push through a new tariff, again bringing rates to a new high. But he was soon absorbed with Cuba. The Cubans were in revolt against their inept Spanish overlords; plantations were laid waste, suspected rebels flung into concentration camps, and considerable damage was done to American-owned property. Publishers William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer tried to sell papers by outdoing each other with gory details. Then, riding at anchor in Havana Harbor on a courtesy call, the U.S. battleship *Maine* was blown apart by an explosion, killing 260 men. Though the cause of the blast remains a mystery, there was no doubt in the mind of the press. "Remember the Maine and to hell with Spain!" shrieked the Hearst papers. McKinley hesitated for nearly two months, while jingoists like his own Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt called him "a white-livered cur." On April 11, McKinley sent a war message to Congress. Even though it sounded rather halfhearted ("I have exhausted every effort to relieve the intolerable condition of affairs which is at our doors... I await your action"), Congress promptly declared war.

Few wars have won so much at so little cost: the fighting lasted only ten weeks; the U.S. lost only 289 men in battle (though disease caused another 4,000 deaths). On May 1, Commodore George Dewey with his Pacific squadron steamed into Manila Bay from Hongkong, where McKinley had forehandedly stationed it, and demolished a Spanish fleet without losing a man. The next month, the expeditionary force sent to Cuba landed near Santiago, Cuba. Shortly thereafter, the Spanish battle fleet emerged from the beleagured city and was destroyed by the guns of the U.S. Atlantic squadron.

In the ensuing settlement, McKinley got Spain to abandon all claims on Cuba and to cede Puerto Rico and Guam to the U.S. as a war compensation. The U.S. later paid Spain $20 million for the Philippine Islands. McKinley, understandably, was much pleased with himself, and in the 1900 elections, he beat Bryan again, adding nearly half a million votes to his majority. Said he, with satisfaction: "I can no longer be called the President of a party. I am now President of the whole people."

But not for long. Just six months after his second inauguration, McKinley spoke at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, and the next day he held a public reception. Because McKinley had always made a point of his accessibility, the guests evidently were not checked very carefully. One of them was a vacant-eyed young anarchist named Leon F. Czolgosz, his right hand swathed in a bandage-like handkerchief which concealed a revolver. When the President turned to greet him, Czolgosz shot him twice. The assassin could only explain that he had wanted to kill "a ruler." Instead, he had killed a President who, despite his cautious and sometimes hesitant ways, had moved the U.S. toward the stage of global power.

Painting by John Singer Sargent: White House Collection

Theodore Roosevelt (1901-1909)

There were all kinds of things of which I was afraid at first,
ranging from grizzly bears to "mean" horses and gunfighters;
but by acting as if I was not afraid I gradually ceased to be afraid.

Theodore Roosevelt

Theodore Roosevelt roared into the White House with the exploding vitality, the volcanic optimism, the flaming soul of the new century. He was the man who gave substance to the spirit of America that had been gathering from Concord Bridge to the Oregon Trail, from Gettysburg to "Remember the Maine!" He was the man who was to change the nation, change the world, and not just for the new century. "The world has set its face hopefully toward our democracy," said T.R. Nobody called him Teddy to his face. His eyes would ignite behind the steel-rimmed spectacles, his fists clench, his mustache bristle. His high voice propelled ballistically: "And, oh, my fellow citizens, *each–one–of–you*–carries on your shoulders the burden of doing well for the sake of your own country–and of seeing that this nation does well for the sake of mankind."

Specifically, Theodore Roosevelt, as President, went to work defining what kind of nation America ought to be: Jeffersonian for "genuine faith in democracy and popular government," and Hamiltonian for "the need of the exercise of broad powers by the national Government." He mobilized the American people to help put down robber industrialists and radical labor leaders precisely so he could protect–and project–both U.S. business and U.S. labor as U.S. institutions. "There had been a riot of individualistic materialism," and "malefactors of great wealth," but for doubt there would be faith, for "don't care" there would be dedication, and America for all time would be the land of opportunity to which the golden gates would never snap shut. America would become a new kind of country in which Americans would align "never between section and section, never between creed and creed, and never, thrice never, between class and class, *but–that–the–line–be–drawn*–on the line of conduct."

He was also the first U.S. President to mobilize the American people to work for the U.S. interest in world peace and order. "Speak softly and carry a big stick, you will go far," he counseled, and the new concept for the new century was deterrence. U.S. armed forces would be deployed with visible strength and efficiency for the first time, not just to win wars, but to discourage other nations from starting wars.

Finally, Theodore Roosevelt was the first U.S. President not only to envision but to enact measures for the conservation of national resources: "I do not recognize the right…to rob, by wasteful use, the generations that come after us." He appealed to the conscience of the nation as he set aside an incredible–at the time–150,000,000 acres of timberland for national use.

It was on October 27, 1858, that this President was born, son of a wealthy merchant-banker, at 28 East 20th Street in New York City. A frail, asthmatic youngster, he exercised so devotedly he was able to box at Harvard, where he graduated Phi Beta Kappa. Always oriented toward public service, he joined Manhattan's 21st District Republican Club and was elected and reelected as a reform member of the lower house of the New York State legislature. After the death of his first wife, Alice Lee, he headed west to work on the Maltese Cross and Elkhorn cattle ranches in the Badlands beneath the thunderclouds of the Dakota Territory. "Black care rarely sits behind a rider whose pace is fast enough," he explained.

Revitalized, T.R. wed a childhood playmate, Edith Kermit Carow, and they settled into Sagamore Hill, at Oyster Bay, Long Island, which was to be his beloved, trophy-cluttered, lifelong home. He served six years as a reform Civil Service Commissioner under Presidents Harrison and Cleveland. That was followed by two years as police commissioner of New York City, where he was deeply moved by his constant prowling on the beats through the slums. "I am dealing with the most important and yet most elementary problems of our municipal life," he wrote. "There is nothing of the purple in it. It is grimy."

Appointed by President McKinley in 1897 to serve as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, T.R. argued for war with Spain, not just to liberate Cuba, but to rally the U.S. into the kind of energetic world involvement advocated by Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan, author of *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History.* As colonel of the 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry–the "Rough Riders"–he led the famous charge against the Spanish defenses on San Juan Hill and became the national hero of the war. As Governor of New York only months afterward, T.R. sponsored so many reform measures that he was promoted upstairs by standpat Republican bosses to run for Vice President on the ticket headed by William McKinley (whom Roosevelt once described as having the backbone of a chocolate éclair). After McKinley's assassination, he took the oath of office on September 14, 1901–at 42, the youngest President of the U.S. "My ambition," he wrote a friend, "is that, in however small a way, the work I do shall be along the Washington and Lincoln lines."

In domestic affairs, he launched the first successful antitrust suit ever brought by an American President to dissolve a corporate monopoly (the Northern Securities Co.) to safeguard the right of fair competition. In the great anthracite coal strike, his was the first Presidential mediation to protect the public interest in a massive struggle between management and labor. T.R. galvanized press and public in successive drives for the U.S.'s first pure food bill, the right for the Interstate Commerce Commission to regulate fair railroad rates.

In international affairs, T.R. was the first U.S. President to win the Nobel Peace Prize, for his brilliant negotiation of a conclusion to the Russo-Japanese War. He deterred Germany's rampaging Kaiser Wilhelm II from adventures in Venezuela and Morocco and helped hold off the outbreak of World War I. He dug the Panama Canal. In what he considered his greatest service to peace, he sent 16 battleships, all painted white–"the Great White Fleet"–on a year-long, good-will mission around the world. This was the American assurance that the American Dream might be global, and was surely here to stay.

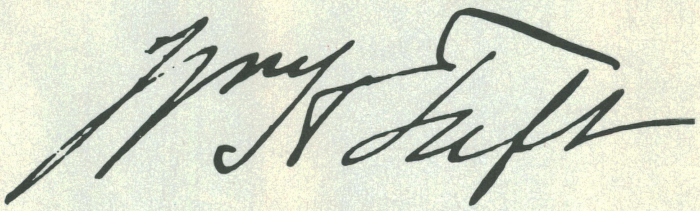
In his personal conduct in the White House T.R.'s example was as significant as his accomplishments. The White House is a "bully pulpit," he said, and he was forever heckling, hectoring, encouraging his fellow citizens to lead more fruitful lives. "When I see a husky man going along with his wife, letting her carry the baby, I know that sort of fellow is no good," said the President. The White House was an arena of family romps and pillow fights, Presidential boxing and judo matches, crag-climbing excursions with foreign diplomats in Rock Creek Park, "the strenuous life" also of verse, biography and natural history. "Theodore…is drunk with himself," said one friend, Henry Adams, and another, Edith Wharton, thought the President lived each moment so intensely and so entirely that each encounter glowed like radium. A third, Oscar Straus, summed up, "He had the quality of vitalizing things," and as T.R. stepped down in favor of his friend William Howard Taft, the U.S.'s morale was soaring to the stars.

On January 6, 1919, after a doomed, third-party, Bull Moose run for the Presidency in 1912, and after passionate advocacy of U.S. entry into World War I, T.R. died, aged 60. "Both life and death are part of the same Great Adventure," said the unforgettable President Theodore Roosevelt.

Painting by Anders L. Zorn; Copyright by White House Historical Association. Photograph by National Geographic Society

William Howard Taft (1909-1913)

Politics make me sick.



"I can't be a Roosevelt," said William Howard Taft. "I can't do things the way he does them. It just isn't me. I am not built that way." It was his judgment of himself, and he was a first-rate judge: the Roughrider's successor simply wasn't the old Roughrider—but nobody else was, either.

Roosevelt relished the power of the Presidency, used it aggressively and thrived in the limelight. Taft shrank from the "bully pulpit," felt like a "fish out of water" in the White House and, from his judicial perspective, saw dangers in the expansion of the Executive office. Roosevelt was the first of the modern Presidents; Taft was politically out of his time—a throwback to the 1880s, a precursor of the 1920s. Ultimately, it was difference in style as much as difference in policy that ruptured their friendship—and the Republican Party.

The vast man with the broad mustache never really wanted to be President. The son of a distinguished Cincinnati lawyer and former U.S. Attorney General, he declared that he "would much prefer to go onto the Supreme Bench for life than to run for the Presidency." But Taft's wife Nellie, who at age 17 had expressed her intent to marry a man who might one day be President, had other ideas. And so did Theodore Roosevelt.

When Taft was sitting on the Federal Circuit Court bench in 1900, he eagerly went to Washington to meet with President McKinley, a fellow Ohioan. Expecting to be named to a vacancy on the high court, he was dismayed when he was asked to become the U.S.'s first high commissioner to the Philippines. Returning home, he "lay and tossed all night and it seemed to me as if even the wheels of the train as they rolled along were saying: 'It's your duty—it's your duty—it's your duty.' " He accepted the post and distinguished himself in it. Later Theodore Roosevelt twice offered him an associate justiceship: "I am awfully sorry, old man, but...I shall have to put you on the Supreme Court." But Taft's devotion to the islanders—along with Nellie's urging him against removing himself from the political path to the White House—compelled him to stay.

Still, when Teddy suggested that Taft become Secretary of War, replacing Elihu S. Root, who had moved to the State Department, Mrs. Taft urged acceptance because it was "the kind of career I wanted for him and expected him to have." Taft complied, becoming Roosevelt's world "troubleshooter" and traveling, most notably to Panama under instruction to "make dirt fly." His idea of his mission: "Make two laughs echo where one groan was heard before."

Taft's laugh was called a great American institution. He laughed even when the joke was on himself: a cable to Elihu Root from the Philippines telling how he had ridden 25 miles on horseback brought the reply to the more than 300-lb. Taft: "Regarding your telegram: How is the horse?" The Taft-Roosevelt friendship blossomed. "You have proved to be my best friend," Roosevelt joshed upon returning from a trip, "for during my absence the country has turned its attention from my teeth to your stomach." By 1907, after he refused another Supreme Court offer, it was clear that "Will" was the heir apparent. Mrs. Taft pushed and Roosevelt pulled the reluctant candidate through the 1908 convention to a first-ballot victory. Still, his hopes were not high: " 'Tis all a gamble, and I shall not be disappointed if I come back to find that the whole thing is busted."

Taft was painfully ill-suited for the political grind. William Jennings Bryan, Democratic candidate for the third time, was an experienced campaigner, Taft a novice. His corpulence invited ridicule; his tendency to fall asleep (even in public) caused concern, as did his Unitarianism. Roosevelt, his constant adviser, urged: "Hit them hard, old man! Let the audience see you smile always, because I feel that your nature shines out so transparently when you do smile—you big, generous, high-minded fellow." Taft, who was to call the campaign "the most uncomfortable four months" of his life, smiled and won comfortably.

The years in the White House were not happy ones. His son Robert (a future Ohio Senator and latter-day candidate for the Republican Presidential nomination) was off at Yale. There was not enough time for golf, for driving in the first Presidential automobile, or for watching baseball (Taft started the tradition of throwing out the first ball of the season). Even the bathtub was too small: an oversize one, large enough to accommodate four ordinary men, was installed. Worst of all, Nellie Taft suffered a stroke that left her speechless and partly paralyzed. The President lovingly aided in a slow but successful recovery.

And the Progressives were on the attack: the Cabinet, they claimed, was stacked against them; the Payne-Aldrich tariff bill, which Taft praised, was too protectionist; dollar diplomacy was pro-business, and the President relied too heavily on ultraconservative House Speaker "Uncle Joe" Cannon. When the President removed a Progressive forester (Gifford Pinchot) for accusing an Old Guard Secretary of the Interior (Richard A. Ballinger) of improprieties, the battle was joined.

Taft wrote apologetically to his predecessor, insisting that Roosevelt's goals had not been betrayed (in fact, Taft's Administration had a far better trustbusting record than T.R.'s). But the damage was done. The Progressive wing of the party had Roosevelt's ear, and the Roughrider, back from a long African safari, had a new itch for office. In February 1912 he announced: "My hat is in the ring," and left the Republican Party so divided between two former friends that a Democratic victory was virtually assured.

The Republican Convention went for Taft. Unreconcilable, Roosevelt made the election a three-way contest by forming the Bull Moose party. Taft fought courageously, but he showed the pain. "Roosevelt was my closest friend," he had said earlier, and he burst into tears. He carried only two states, Utah and Vermont. The man who cast the largest shadow in the history of the Presidency could not escape that of the man who placed him there.

He accepted defeat gracefully—and gratefully. "The nearer I get to the Inauguration of my successor, the greater relief I feel," he wrote. But his greatest joy was yet to come. In 1921 President Warren G. Harding named the 63-year-old to the Supreme Court as Chief Justice of the U.S. "The truth is," wrote a rejuvenated Taft in 1925, "that, in my present life, I don't remember that I ever was President."

Some 20 years before, Will and Nellie Taft had sat with a playful President Roosevelt, who cast himself as a seer: "I see a man weighing 350 pounds. There is something hanging over his head. I cannot make out what it is... At one time it looks like the Presidency; then again it looks like the Chief Justiceship." "Make it the Presidency," said Nellie. "Make it the Chief Justiceship," said her husband.

William Howard Taft was to experience, uniquely, the burdens and satisfactions of both.

Painting by Edmund Tarbell: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921)

I can find no man in history I should care to be like. I want to be myself.

Was Woodrow Wilson a great President? In vision, certainly. In accomplishment, less certainly. For Wilson's great virtue—and his great fault—was that he yearned, personally and godlike, to sculpture the world. Not for him the notion that honest men may differ honestly, that democracy's ends were always to be accomplished by trimming and adjusting, that politics, even world politics, was the art of the possible. His ambition was to fling a vision in the face of mankind and challenge it to respond. If the world did not quite work like that, that was the world's fault. For in domestic as in foreign matters, he answered only to his conscience, and his conscience answered only to God. Unfortunately, history is what actually can be accomplished. If his unyielding pride ultimately destroyed him and he failed, he must be left with credit for giving men a vision that mankind still yearns to achieve.

Wilson drew his strict faith and his devotion to the power of words from his father, a highly literate Presbyterian preacher of Scotch-Irish ancestry. In the family's wanderings from Wilson's birthplace in Staunton, Va., to various ministries in Georgia and North and South Carolina, Father Wilson would conduct morning prayers. Evenings he would read aloud from Dickens and Scott. Young Woodrow graduated from Princeton, studied law and briefly practiced it. But mostly he wrote. By age 28 he had published many articles, as well as his first book, *Congressional Government*. On the strength of these he won his academic jobs—at Bryn Mawr, then Wesleyan, finally moving to Princeton. There he quickly became the campus' most popular faculty member for the wit and pith of his lectures, and wrote prodigiously (some twelve scholarly volumes, countless published articles). In 1902, at age 45, he was unanimously elected president of the university.

Characteristically, he set out to reshape the university, spent seven years at it, then blew up a minor issue into a matter of principle that he presented to Princeton on a well-publicized take-it-or-leave-it basis. In reality, he was already dickering with New Jersey Democratic bosses for nomination as Governor. Elected to that office, Wilson soon was busy stumping the country proposing himself for President.

He almost did not make it. The leading contender for the Democratic nomination was House Speaker Champ Clark of Missouri. It took 46 ballots before the delegates swung to Wilson. In the ensuing election, the Republicans were split between Taft and the rebellious Progressives organized by Theodore Roosevelt. So Wilson won, with only 42% of the popular vote.

In his first term, Wilson got a tariff reduction passed, fortuitously with a constitutional amendment that authorized the first graduated income tax. He won approval of the Federal Reserve Act, which created the present banking system. Then there was the Clayton Antitrust Act, which has also been called the Magna Carta of labor, since it recognized that a labor union was not to be considered an illegal combination in restraint of trade.

Personally, he was an enigma to most. From the protection of a podium, he could move men deeply, and with his own family and a handful of real intimates (he never had more than a few), he could be charming, tender and totally without stiffness. He liked to dance jigs, sing music-hall melodies, recite nonsense rhymes and limericks, tell dialect stories. He loved the common man sincerely in the abstract; it was actual contact with him that he shrank from. "No man would, on account of my Scotch physiognomy, ever familiarly slap me on the back in a hail-fellow-well-met way. I should hate it."

He was passionately devoted to his first wife Ellen Axson, a Georgia girl he married at 28, and their three daughters. When she died 18 months after his Inauguration, he wailed: "Oh my God, what am I to do?" Then, seven months after her death, Wilson met Edith Galt, the handsome 42-year-old widow of a prosperous Washington jeweler. They were married nine months later, and thenceforth Wilson consulted her on every subject, even having her sit in on his highest councils.

The most anxious consultations involved foreign affairs, for which Wilson was admittedly ill-prepared. But the war in Europe left him no choice. He felt armed by his conviction that he was born to save the world from itself, but he found it harder than it seemed. At first Wilson merely proclaimed U.S. neutrality. Even when German U-boats sank a U.S. tanker, followed by the sinking of the *Lusitania* without warning, he contented himself with protests. "There is such a thing as a man being too proud to fight," he said. He squeaked through the 1916 election largely on his domestic record and his party's cry—"He kept us out of war!"—defeating Charles Evans Hughes by grace of some 4,000 votes, which gave him California.

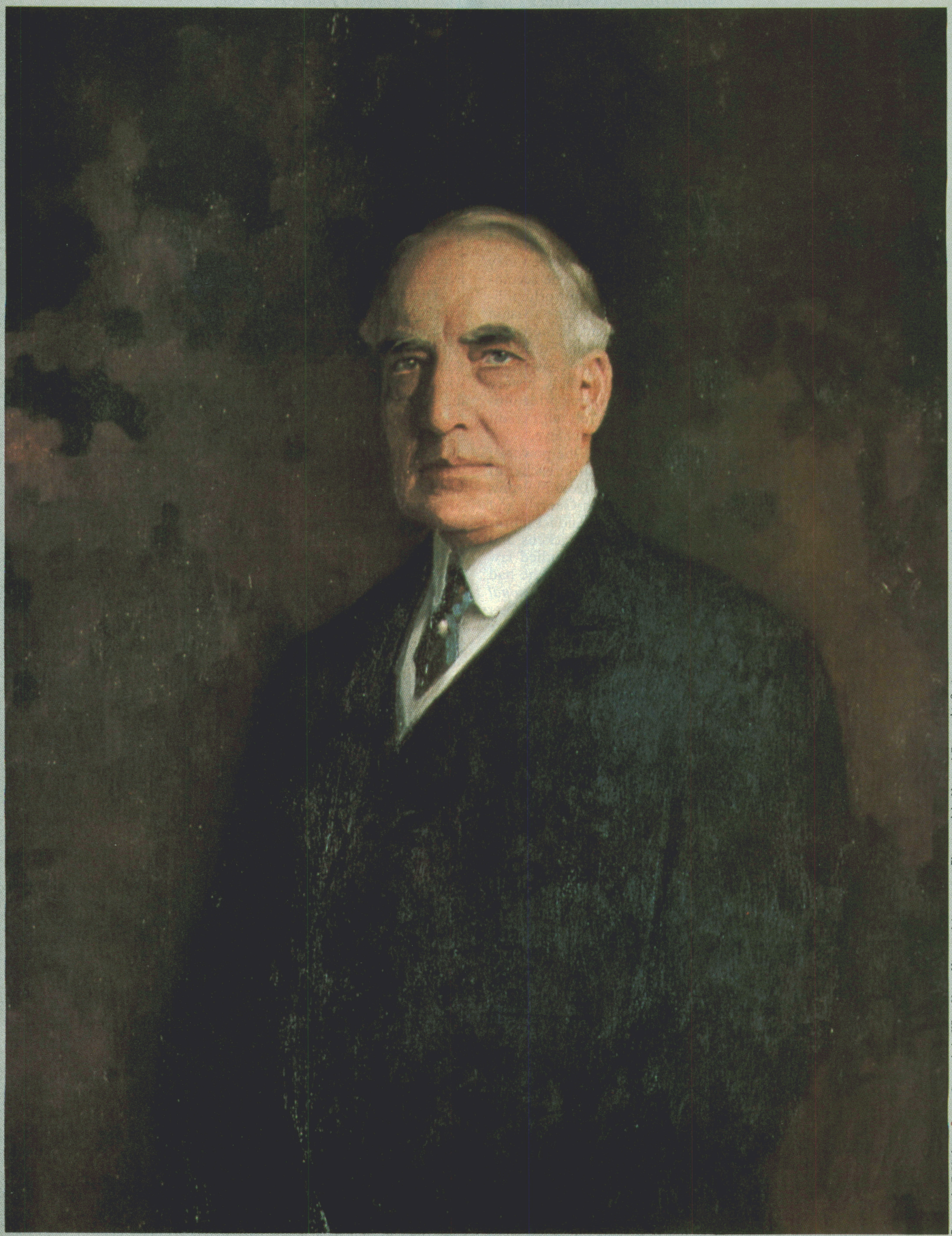
Then he tried a plea for "Peace Without Victory," for he clearly saw that the only peace that could be lasting was one in which the vanquished nations were not left impoverished, embittered and biding their time for revenge. Neither side responded. However, with the German resumption of unlimited submarine warfare, Wilson asked Congress to declare war. It was to be "a war without rancor and without selfish object, without revenge." "The world," he said, "must be made safe for democracy." Wilson appointed able men to mobilize the economy and to command the armed forces, never interfering with either. His real heart was in the peace, and he produced his Fourteen Points. They included, most important, a League of Nations.

Against the advice of many, Wilson insisted on going to Paris himself. Was he not peace's leading apostle? European crowds cheered him wildly. But behind the conference's closed doors, France's Georges Clemenceau snorted: "President Wilson and his Fourteen Points bore me. Even God Almighty has only ten." Wilson did finally get approval for his League of Nations, but the effort exhausted him and, unhappily, when he returned home with the treaty, he found mounting resistance to it and to him: a group of Senators led by Massachusetts' Henry Cabot Lodge refused to accept the treaty as a package, as Wilson demanded.

Frustrated, Wilson typically decided to appeal over the Senators' heads to the country. He set out upon a tour that took him through 30 cities in 24 days. But after speaking at Pueblo, Colo., he collapsed with a slight stroke. A week later, a second and more severe stroke paralyzed his left side.

For the next few weeks Wilson was near death. Nobody was permitted to see him except his wife Edith, who would carry messages to his bedroom and then emerge with an answer. The press began to talk of the "Presidentes." For seven months Wilson was an almost total recluse in the White House, but slowly his mind cleared, even though his physical state remained precarious, and his old stubbornness came back. When he was presented with Lodge's proposed fourteen reservations to his League Covenant, even Edith suggested he agree to the compromise. He flatly refused. "Let Lodge compromise," he croaked. The treaty was rejected, and in the election of 1921, so were the Democrats. Wilson moved with his wife to a quiet house on S Street.

Occasionally he would emerge on the porch to address a delegation and there, tottering on his cane, he made his last defiant speech: "I have seen fools resist providence before, and I have seen their destruction, as it will come upon these again,—utter destruction and contempt. That we shall prevail is as sure as God reigns." Three months later, at age 67, he was dead.



Painting by E. Hodgson Smart: Copyright by White House Historical Association. Photograph by National Geographic Society

Warren Harding (1921-1923)

I expect it is very possible that I would make as good a President as a great many men…
and I would almost be willing to make a bet that I would be a more "commonsensible" President…

The terrifying memory of staccato machine guns, of throat-clenching poison gas, hung heavily in the dock shed at Hoboken, N.J., as President and Mrs. Warren G. Harding walked humbly along row after row of flag-covered pine caskets. It was May 1921. The freighter *Wheaton* had just brought the bodies of 5,212 American war dead home. "I find a hundred thousand sorrows touching my heart," the President said in a brief address to the relatives of the dead, "and there is a ringing in my ears. It must not be again. It must not be again." There were tears in his eyes, and his voice choked. The nation, and perhaps a world also, spoke with him matter-of-factly. "God grant that it will not be, and let a practical people join in cooperation with God to the end that it shall not be."

The previous November, Warren Harding, president and publisher of the Marion (Ohio) *Star*, longtime "harmonizer of Ohio Republican factions, but only a single-term U.S. Senator, had won overwhelming Presidential election success. As the relaxed, amiable embodiment of a people fed up with crisis, he carried 37 out of 48 states against Democrat James M. Cox (and Running Mate Franklin Roosevelt) and won the highest percentage (60.3%) recorded by a Presidential candidate until then.

Warren Harding had not opposed U.S. entry into World War I; on the contrary, along with most Americans, he had been for it. "It has become the fortune of this republic to cry 'Halt!' to a maddened power," he said, and he was the Senate leader in April 1917 for an amendment to the draft bill that would have permitted former President Theodore Roosevelt to raise four divisions of volunteers. This, said Senator Harding, "would put new life in every Allied trench and a new glow in every Allied campfire." President Wilson, who despised Roosevelt and suspected theatrics, turned down the project as unrealistic, even though Roosevelt already had 200,000 very real volunteers.

After the war, however, Senator Harding, along with many Americans, had been disillusioned and disgusted. What had the Great Adventure brought forth other than the Treaty of Versailles and its entangling twin sister, the League of Nations? What had the doughboys gotten out of it after the ticker-tape parades other than two months' pay and a free ticket home? Harding, the authentic voice, wrote about the League in particular: "I don't think there is anything in it for the United States."

On March 4, 1921, in one of the most famous inaugural addresses of all time, President Harding summed up: "We must strive for normalcy* to reach stability." Earlier, he had said it was a patriot's duty to "stabilize America first, to prosper America first, to think of America first, to exalt America first," and he had not needed to leave his front porch in Marion, Ohio, to win his colossal success.

Warren Gamaliel Harding, the 29th President, was born in Blooming Grove, Ohio, on Nov. 2, 1865. He was the first President to be born after the Civil War, the seventh president (all Republicans) from Ohio. At the remarkable age of 19, after attending local schools and Iberia College, working on his family's farm, in a sawmill, on a railroad, as a teacher, as an insurance salesman, he and two friends bought the Marion *Star*. Price of the four-page daily: $300, plus $900 in past debts. Circulation of the newspaper: 700. An attack on the dying former President Grant prompted young Harding to write: "A cowardly, sneaking copperhead in Van Wert County…says 'I expected to see General Grant recover as soon as he received his pension.' If that low-down pup knew the contempt he brought for himself by that utterance…"

In the 1890s, the *Star* prospered as Marion grew, and as Mrs. Harding, a divorcee named Florence Kling DeWolfe, five years his senior, tightened up on management procedures. She even used to spank the newsboys, one of whom was Socialist Norman Thomas. Meanwhile Warren bloviated, became a director of the Marion County Bank, the Marion Lumber Co., the Marion County Telephone Co., a trustee of the Trinity Baptist Church and a prominent Elk. Ohio Republican Kingmaker Harry M. Daugherty admired Harding's good looks, resonant oratory, harmonizing spirit and loyal circle of friends. Daugherty, as early as 1899, said, "Gee, what a great-looking President he'd make." But likable Warren Harding knew his own very human limitations. "Am I a big enough man?" he asked about the Presidency. He moved inoffensively and enjoyably through the Ohio State Senate, the lieutenant governorship and the U.S. Senate, with Daugherty's help and his wife's prodding, admired alike by rival Roosevelt and Taft Republicans.

History, for better or for worse, tapped Senator Harding in that famous smoke-filled room at the Blackstone Hotel in Chicago during the Republican National Convention of 1920. The front runners were deadlocked, Daugherty thought he had second- third- and fourth-choice strength, and the bosses asked Harding if there was anything that might be held against him. Warren Harding said no—which was quite an answer, since he had been conducting simultaneous love affairs with a neighbor's wife and a girl who used to deliver the high school news to the Marion *Star* and was now the mother of Harding's seven-month-old illegitimate daughter.

The time for decision came after his election: Would he bring statesmen into the Cabinet and inner White House circle, or his cronies, already known in Washington as "the Ohio gang." President Harding did both and, in so doing, determined a sad fate for the new day for which the nation had yearned so much. "I have been on the square with you," President Harding told the employees of the *Star*, "and I want to be on the square with all the world." Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes won a little peace by negotiating a 5-5-3 ratio between the U.S.-British-Japanese capital ships at the Washington Naval Conference. Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon and Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover helped usher normalcy from recession to prosperity. Charles G. Dawes, the U.S.'s first Budget Director, reorganized federal finances, saved almost $2 billion, and popularized his pet epithet "Hell 'n Maria!"

But the President's reputation suffered when it became known that Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall had taken some $400,000 in gifts and "loans" to lease naval oil reserves at Teapot Dome, Wyo., and Elk Hills, Calif., to Oilmen Harry F. Sinclair and Edward L. Doheny. Also, that Attorney General Daugherty was privy to frauds in the Justice Department and the Veterans' Bureau. On his last cross-country "voyage of understanding," the President, enroute to Alaska, asked Secretary Hoover: "If you knew of a great scandal in our Administration, would you for the good of the country and the party expose it publicly, or would you bury it?" Hoover replied: "Publish it."

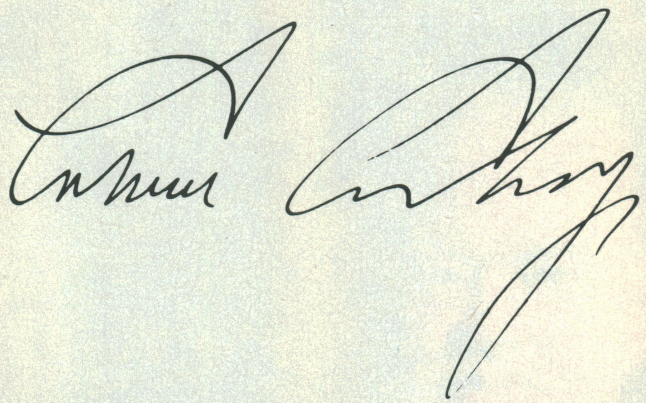
On Aug. 2, 1923, only a few days back from Alaska, the President died in San Francisco, probably of an embolism, without letting his fellow Americans know how Warren Gamaliel Harding would have answered his own question.

*Perhaps the most famous single word in inaugural history, normalcy, was not coined by Harding. It appeared first in 1857 in Davies and Peck's *Mathematical Dictionary*. Harding first used the word in a campaign speech; his written text then read "normality," was mispronounced as "normalty" or "normalcy," and the last word was reported by the press. Harding decided he liked the word and used it often.

Painting by Dewitt Lockman: New-York Historical Society

Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929)

If you don't say anything you won't be called on to repeat it.



"Silent Cal" Coolidge always meant what he said—which was as little as would suffice. "You must talk to me, Mr. Coolidge," a woman reporter once pleaded. "I made a bet with my editor that I could get more than two words out of you." President Coolidge looked up: "You lose!"

While mores of the 1920s underwent frenzied upheaval, Coolidge stood solidly as a block of Vermont granite for the plain virtues. He was the dour man in the country store who advised, "Do not try anything new." He was the laconic observer who assured people that the horseless carriage "won't amount to much." He was the shy, retiring New Englander of guarded emotions and restrained impulses for whom work and thrift formed a holy creed. "When things are going along all right," he would caution, "it is a good plan to let them alone."

It was Aug. 3, 1923. Well after bedtime (which is to say, about 10:30 p.m.), there was a rap on the door of Colonel John Coolidge's small homestead in Plymouth Notch, Vt. Upstairs slept his son, the Vice President. Mr. Perkins, the telegraph operator from Bridgewater, stood with the message that President Harding had died. The 51-year-old Coolidge, who had been born above the store across the street, and seemingly had never left, was to be President of the United States.

He awakened, splashed some water on his face, shaved, dressed, and arranged to become the only President to have the oath of office administered by his father, a notary public. Chief Justice Taft later confirmed the legality of the procedure. At 2:47 a.m., by the light of the parlor's kerosene lamp, his hand resting on his family Bible, Coolidge was sworn in. He turned to the half dozen or so witnesses and, characteristically, said only, "Good night." Then the new President of the U.S. went back to bed.

This Yankee who had "listened" his way up the Republican ladder returned to Washington, "A Puritan in Babylon." Alice Roosevelt Longworth said that the White House "was as different as a New England front parlor is from a back room speakeasy." Indeed, Washington of the Harding era was a far cry from the days when, as an Amherst graduate and lonely Northampton lawyer, Calvin Coolidge's diligence won him the first of his many Massachusetts offices.

And it was perseverance—certainly not his charm, for he was afraid of women—that won him his wife, Grace Goodhue, a teacher at the Clarke School for the Deaf. (He later joked: "Having taught the deaf to hear, she might perhaps teach the mute to speak!") Their marriage became shaped by Collidge's idiosyncrasies. They lived in cheap rooming houses for the first months of their marriage, before moving to a rented duplex they would call home until after the White House years. Though she was never a part of his politics, Grace Coolidge was his other half—cheerful, informal, talkative, charming. She had to bear with his peevish tantrums, his anachronistic ways, his fanatical frugality. Once, after buying a medical book for $8, she was afraid to tell him. She left it on a table for him to see. He said nothing. Several weeks later, she glanced at the flyleaf: "Don't see any receipt here for curing suckers! Calvin Coolidge."

Mrs. Coolidge reared their two boys while he lived part of the year in a $1.50-a-day room in Boston, rose in the ranks of the legislature, and built the rock-ribbed reputation that made him Governor in 1919. That year, confronted with a breakdown of law and order in Boston—the result of a strike by police who sought affiliation with the A.F.L.—Coolidge was thrust onto the national stage.

When Calvin was a youth, some classmates at school had dragged a metal stove down some stairs, causing a clanging racket. The schoolmaster asked Calvin if he had heard the noise; he said he had. Why hadn't he done anything about it? "It wa'n't my stove!" And now, as the police stayed off duty, Coolidge felt it "wa'n't" his strike—a local, not a state matter. He refused to intervene. But with tension turning to violence and the strike crumbling, the Governor finally deployed the state guard. He wired Samuel Gompers: "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time." No striker was allowed to return to the force.

Coolidge captured the headlines. Soon Boston Merchant turned Kingmaker Frank W. Stearns, published a volume of Coolidge speeches entitled *Have Faith in Massachusetts,* and he was mentioned as Presidential timber. Henry Cabot Lodge, in all his Brahmin hauteur, deprecated: "Nominate a man who lives in a two-family house? Never!" The nod went to Harding, but the sandy-haired, easily forgettable fellow became the Vice-Presidential nominee.

When word of Harding's death came, Coolidge perhaps remembered an earlier aphorism: "When duties are sent, powers are sent to enable their discharge." His leadership (or lack of it) seemed in key with his era: "If you see ten troubles coming down the road, you can be sure that nine will run into the ditch before they reach you." The tenth—the Depression—was unforeseen in the giddy "Coolidge Prosperity."

Coolidge, a conservative whose old-fashioned simplicity was both asset and hindrance, pleased the financial community: "The business of America is business." His grasp of the obvious amused the nation: "When more and more people are thrown out of work, unemployment results." But when the New York Stock Exchange began to wobble, it wa'n't his market. He refused to curb the stock speculators, and left his successor with a bubble that was sure to burst.

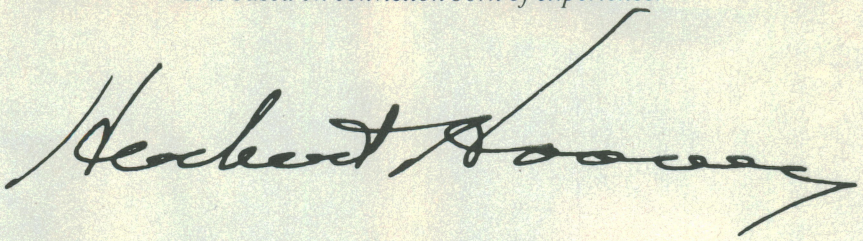
A contented nation had kept cool with Coolidge and elected him to a full term in 1924. The second term was not a happy one, though, for the Coolidges. Early in the campaign, 16-year-old Calvin Jr. had died of blood poisoning from an infected blister. "When he went," lamented Coolidge, "the power and the glory of the Presidency went with him." As the nation turned its eyes to its hero, Charles Lindbergh, on Aug. 2, 1927, Calvin Coolidge announced, "I do not choose to run for President in 1928."

He returned to Northampton, bought a home of his own to avoid the curious, and wrote an autobiography which was notable for saying very little. He was bewildered by the Depression, but was even more concerned by the New Dealers who proposed to solve it. Shortly before his death in January, 1933, Calvin Coolidge said, truthfully, "I feel I no longer fit in with these times."

Painting by Elmer W. Greene. Copyright by White House Historical Association. Photograph by National Geographic Society

Herbert Hoover (1929-1933)

Our individualism is in our very nature.
It is based on conviction born of experience.



"We ground our own wheat and corn at the mill," said the 31st President, recalling his poor boyhood as a Quaker orphan in West Branch, Iowa. "We slaughtered our own hogs for meat; we wove at least part of our own clothing...We erected our own buildings; we made our own soap." At the age of ten, he traveled to Oregon by migrant train on a seven-day journey to live with a more prosperous Quaker uncle. "Did thee turn out the lights?" his uncle once asked him. "Yes," said Herbert Clark Hoover. "They were only running up the gas bill."

Entering the inaugural class at the brand-new Stanford University in October 1891, he heard Senator Leland Stanford say: "All that we can do for you is to place the opportunity within your reach." As a Bachelor of Arts in geology, he set out four years later, with $40 in his pocket, upon one of the greatest of all American success stories. "I had lived all my life in hard times," Hoover recalled, "but I had never heard of depressions...so I did not need to worry about that. Nor did I have to worry about what the Government was going to do about it."

Industrious, thrifty, idealistic, self-reliant Herbert Hoover was to become a world-famous geologist and mining engineer, a world-renowned humanitarian in war and peace; he would also become one of the most effective Cabinet officers the U.S. ever had, and one of the best-qualified candidates for President. "We in America are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land," said Republican Hoover in the campaign of 1928, and he defeated New York's Democratic Governor Al Smith by 444 electoral votes to 87, by 21,411,991 popular votes to 15,000,185. Compassionate Al Smith from the Lower East Side of New York City had gazed with bewilderment at the prairies on a campaign swing West, asking: "What do the people do out here? How do they stand it?"

The Stock Market crash of Oct. 24, 1929, took away almost as much as the U.S. had spent fighting World War I; the Great Depression brought the U.S. almost to its knees. Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon advised: "Liquidate labor, liquidate stocks, liquidate farms, liquidate real estate." But Hoover opted for limited governmental intervention and fought energetically against the Depression with such measures as the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, mortgage aid to farmers and homeowners, increased public works and flood-control projects, the Agricultural Marketing Act and other elements of what historians would call "A Republican New Deal." But how to restore that vital popular confidence when, despite the spasmodically improving indices, there were 12 million unemployed? President Hoover, high-collared and somber, once said to Rudy Vallee, not entirely in jest: "If you can sing a song that would make people forget their troubles, I'll give you a medal." Vallee gave the nation *Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?*

Young Herbert Hoover left Stanford in 1895, for the gold mines of Nevada City, Calif. There he got a job "pushing a car in the lower levels of the Reward Mine for $2 a day on a ten-hour shift and a seven-day week." Then work fell off, and "I then learned...the ceaseless tramping and ceaseless refusal at the employment office day by day." He got his chance when he began to work for a San Francisco mining tycoon, Louis Janin, not as a Stanford-trained mining engineer but as a clerk, "I can typewrite, and I have a pretty good handwriting." Janin was soon sending Hoover on research-and-report missions in the Sierras and, as assistant at an especially tough mine, Hoover helped keep the peace with a six-shooter in his belt and a rifle in his saddleguard.

The Herbert Hoover story moved next to the gold rush of Western Australia. It was 1897 and, as an agent for Bewick, Moreing & Co. of London, mining consultants, Hoover went on treks on Afghan camels into the interior. There he made his first larger-than-life bet: he recommended an investment of $500,000 in a mine named Sons of Gwalia, which other prospectors had considered hopeless. Unbelievably, but true, the company accepted Hoover's recommendation and, in the next 50 years, the mines returned $55 million in gold and $10 million in dividends.

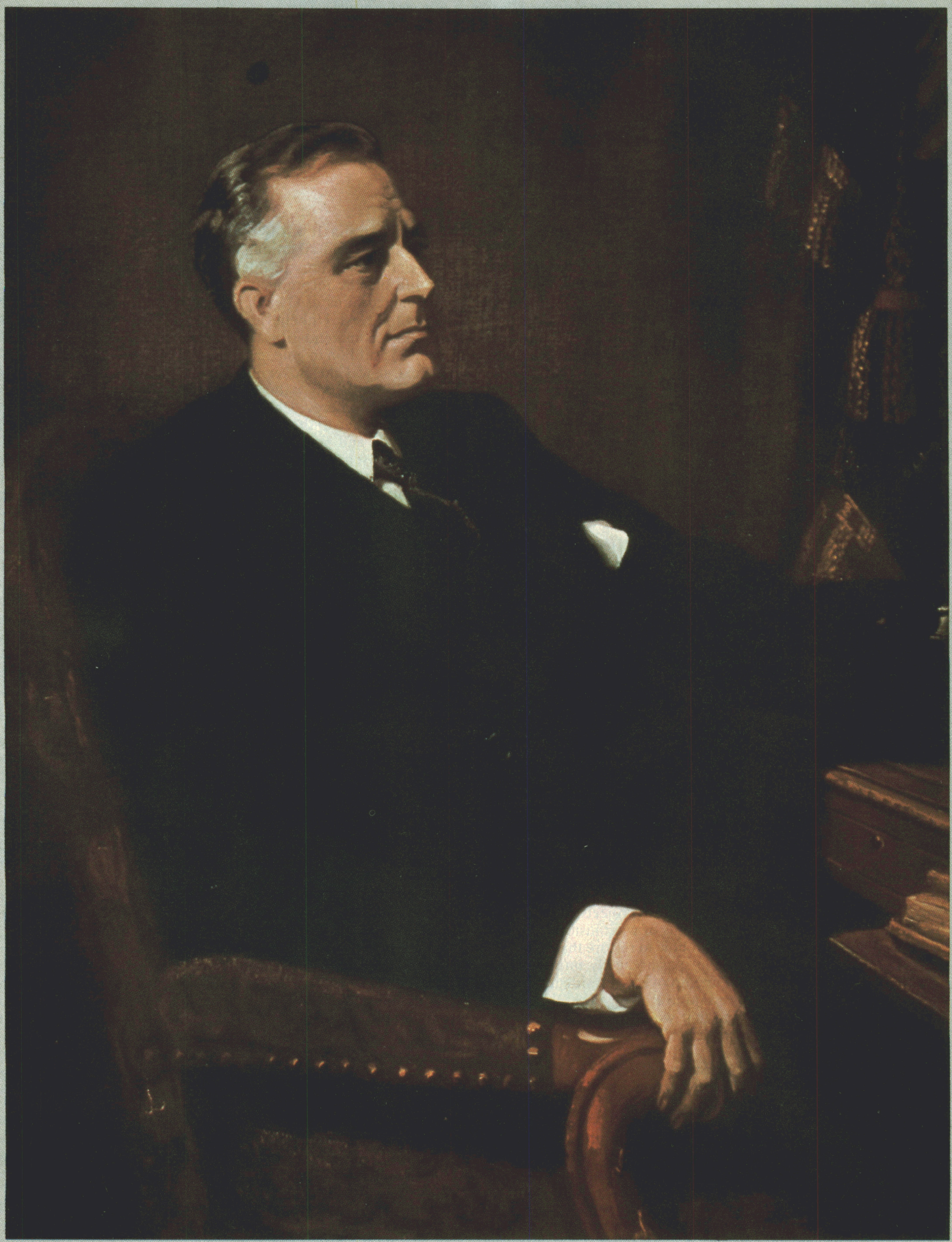
Next, it was the Boxer Rebellion in China. Herbert Hoover was there too, along with his bride of only a year, Lou Henry Hoover of Monterey, Calif., whom he had met at Stanford. A mining executive to the Chinese Engineering and Mining Co., he was trapped and bombarded in the siege of Tientsin. He distinguished himself by rushing into a blazing house to rescue two small children amid a hail of Boxer bullets. Not long afterward, he was made a junior partner of Bewick, Moreing. Seven years after that, he became an independent international mining consultant, accumulating a personal fortune of $4 million.

At the outbreak of World War I, Hoover was in London. Asked by Ambassador Walter Hines Page to organize the repatriation of 120,000 U.S. citizens there, Hoover did the job brilliantly. Next, as director of the Commission for Relief in Belgium, he organized the feeding of 10 million inhabitants of German-occupied Belgium and France, personally making more than 40 dangerous journeys as a neutral across the lines. After the U.S. entered the war, President Wilson made him Food Administrator, and in those pre-Depression days, to Hooverize meant to conserve food. After the war, as director of the American Relief Administration and the Supreme Economic Council, he organized the feeding of scores of millions of destitute Europeans and unquestionably saved thousands of lives. "He is certainly a wonder," said Franklin D. Roosevelt at that time, "and I wish we could make him President of the United States."

On March 4, 1929, he became President, admired by Progressives who remembered how he had supported Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose movement in 1912 and by those who respected his remarkable seven-year stint as Secretary of Commerce for Presidents Harding and Coolidge.

But the Great Depression was more than President Hoover or anybody else could handle on his own. "Hoovervilles" were hovels of packing crates and tar paper. One of these, across the Anacostia River from Washington, D.C., was occupied by war veterans who had wanted to advance the dates of their bonus payments from 1945 to 1932. When violence broke out between the veterans and the police, the Washington commissioners called for federal troops who drove out the veterans. Then, on the eve of President Roosevelt's Inauguration, the banks began to fail nationwide in a terrifying panic. Hoover appealed for help to the President-elect: "A most critical situation has arisen in the country." But F.D.R. held off acknowledging what he termed "a cheeky document" for ten days.

President Hoover died on Oct. 20, 1964, aged 90. He had performed further distinguished service as director of the Hoover commissions on governmental reorganization under Presidents Truman and Eisenhower. Of the vilification he suffered for the Depression he said ironically that to assume that he had "caused" the Depression would be "a great compliment to the energies and capacities of one man." President Roosevelt had also known the U.S. was on the brink. When a friend suggested to F.D.R. that if he failed, he would live on as the U.S.'s worst President, F.D.R. replied: "If I fail, I shall be the last one."



Painting by Frank Salisbury: Copyright by White House Historical Association. Photograph by National Geographic Society

Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-April 12, 1945)

I am an old campaigner, and I love a good fight.

Franklin Roosevelt did joyous battle. Crippling disease? Republicans, wherever he found them? Dissident Democrats? The Great Depression? The U.S. Congress? The Nine Old Men of the Supreme Court? Presidential tradition? Hitler's Germany and Tojo's Japan (with Mussolini's Italy thrown in for bad measure)? No matter. F.D.R. fought them all with upthrust jaw and zestful grin and cigarette holder at point like a knight-errant's lance.

Whence sprang this warrior's spirit? It was hardly evident in six generations of Roosevelt men, moneyed and mannered but otherwise unremarkable; yet in the seventh generation it exploded in the persons of Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, fifth cousins. There is no clue in the little boy, cloistered on the banks of the Hudson, who wore dresses until he was five, then turned to Lord Fauntleroy suits. Or in the Grotonian who distinguished himself mainly by winning the Punctuality Prize, or the Harvard *Crimson* editor who exhorted spectators to cheer louder at games. Conceivably, the spark began to glow in 1910, when he ran for the state senate, touring the district in a rented red Maxwell and urging voters to "call me Franklin." The issue was Clean Government *vs.* the Bosses, and after his election he tilted at the Sachems of Tammany Hall.

If activity is the criterion, then perhaps the breakthrough came when he was Assistant Navy Secretary in the Wilson Administrations. He became a "Big Navy" man, gloried in the 17-gun salutes accorded his rank, and agitated for the Administration to hurry toward saving democracy. (By 1916 he was saying, "We've got to get into this war.") He also made a name for himself—enough to be selected as Democrat James M. Cox's running mate in the disastrous 1920 campaign against Warren G. Harding.

But even that period fails to provide a satisfactory explanation for the extraordinary quality that set Franklin Roosevelt apart. The turning point came in August 1921, when he went boating off Campobello, New Brunswick, Canada, paused to put out a forest fire on a small island, then plunged into the cold water of the Bay of Fundy. Next day, he felt severe pain in his back and legs; the following day, he could not move his legs. It took two weeks for a correct diagnosis: poliomyelitis. For the rest of his life, Franklin Roosevelt was to have his legs imprisoned in ten-pound braces and to move about in a wheelchair. And he emerged from the first months of his ordeal a different, tougher man.

His career was henceforth written to the notes of a battle hymn. Shortly after his election as New York's Governor in 1928, he was writing: "I am in one continuous glorious fight with the Republican legislative leaders." Glorious it may have been; notably successful it was not, and Roosevelt spent much of his two terms as Governor perfecting the techniques that were to take him to the White House—the "fireside chats" over radio, the blizzards of press releases and the grass-roots organization of Democratic America. Nominated at the 1932 Democratic Convention, he gave his first Administration its name in his acceptance speech: "I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people." Poor Herbert Hoover (who vented his frustration by calling F.D.R. "a chameleon on plaid") never had a prayer, and on March 4, 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President. Putting the final touches on his inaugural speech, he had near by a copy of Thoreau with the words: "Nothing is so much to be feared as fear." Changed only slightly—"the only thing we have to fear is fear itself"—these became his battle cry against the Depression which was convulsing America.

The New Deal transformed American capitalism and made a start toward a welfare state. AAA, CCC, CWA, FCC, FDIC, FHA, NRA, NLRB, PWA, SEC, TVA and WPA—an alphabet of agencies. Ray the Mole and Tommy the Cork and Harry the Hop, Cactus Jack and General Hugh and Honest Harold—names in the wind. And always, everywhere, Eleanor—the fifth cousin once removed whom Roosevelt had married and who acted as her husband's legs and eyes and ears in gauging the nation's mood. "Watch the people's faces," he told her. "Look at the condition of their clothes on the wash line. You can tell a lot from that." Yet for all the agencies and aides, it was a one-man show. He was no economist (in four years of Harvard economics, "everything I was taught was wrong"). He was not a political philosopher ("A second-class intellect but first-class temperament," said Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes). But he was a genius about the human spirit—and that was what America needed. And in 1936 Alfred M. Landon of Kansas was swept away as by a prairie fire.

"We have only just begun to fight!" cried F.D.R. during the campaign. And he was unhappily right. His second term was scarred by his battle to pack the Supreme Court. Genuinely anguished because several key New Deal measures had been abrogated by a court dominated by elderly conservatives, he came up with a scheme which would have permitted him to appoint an additional Justice (up to six) for every one who declined to retire after 70. "What a grand fight it is going to be!" he wrote to a friend. But for once, his instincts had failed him: the U.S. cherished the institution of the court as much as the person of F.D.R., and he suffered humiliating defeat in Congress.

In retrospect, there seems little likelihood that F.D.R. would have sought a third term had it not been for Adolf Hitler. But in September 1939, Europe went to war and, though Roosevelt was bound by law to neutrality, he was by nature the least neutral of men; in September 1940, he announced that the U.S. would give Britain 50 antiquated destroyers in exchange for leases on air and naval bases, including Bermuda. "Congress," he confided to a secretary, "is going to raise hell about this."

With war fast approaching, he could not turn away. He sought a "spontaneous draft" from his party's convention; instead, he got the famed "Voice from the Sewers"—roars of "We want Roosevelt!" over the amplifiers in Chicago's International Amphitheatre, controlled by the city's Boss Edward J. Kelly. At campaign's start, F.D.R. assumed an above-it-all stance. But when Republican Wendell Willkie began to make inroads, F.D.R. told Harold Ickes, "I am fighting mad." Willkie had said he wanted to meet "the Champ." He did, and the Champ knocked him out.

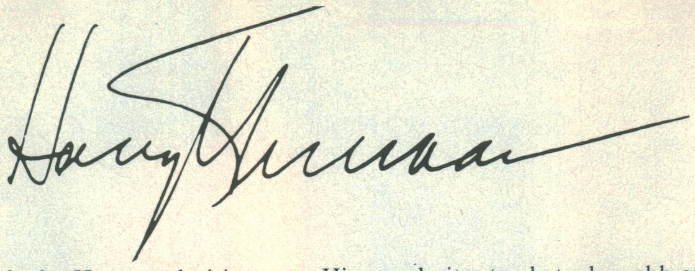
Nearly eleven months after his third term began, Roosevelt received a telephone call. "Mr. President," said Navy Secretary Frank Knox, "it looks as if the Japanese have attacked Pearl Harbor." In the first awful months, it was F.D.R.'s thankless task to inspire confidence until the U.S. truly became the arsenal of democracy. This he did by the example of his own dauntless spirit. Later, when victory was apparent, it was up to him to prevent the nation from falling into the lethargy of overconfidence. This he did by the force of his own resolution. In 1944, he needed no urging to try for re-election. And though Republican Thomas E. Dewey conducted an aggressive campaign, the U.S. was unwilling to cast loose its great leader with war's end in sight.

But for Franklin Roosevelt too, the end was in sight. He returned weary and ill, an old man at 63, from the tragic summit conference at Yalta. On April 12, 1945, he died of a massive cerebral hemorrhage at Warm Springs, Ga. Although mortal, he was touched by immortality—and scarcely an American then adult or adolescent lives today, more than 30 years later, who does not remember exactly where he was and what he was doing when he heard that Franklin Delano Roosevelt was dead.

Painting by Greta Kempton: Copyright by White House Historical Association. Photograph by National Geographic Society

Harry S. Truman (1945-1953)

The buck stops here.



Few men were ever so belied by their looks. He was a decision maker who looked like a bureaucrat, a humanist who looked like an ascetic, an indulgent father who looked like a demanding schoolmaster, an artillery captain who looked like the company clerk. But he was a man supremely in touch with himself and with history. He knew what had to be done, he knew what he could do, and he did it. A little common man, with country manners and blunt speech, he said his say and left his hearers mumchance. His name was Harry S. Truman, and the S. stood for Something.

Franklin Roosevelt was a hard act to follow, and nobody knew it better than Truman, particularly on that fateful occasion when he was called from a convivial gathering on Capitol Hill to the White House and found himself President. He told reporters: "Did you ever have a bull or a load of hay fall on you? If you have, you know how I felt last night. I felt as if two planets and the whole constellation had fallen on me. I don't know if you boys pray, but if you do, please pray God to help me carry this load."

The new President was not long in getting tested. Before his Presidency was 14 weeks old, he had to go to Potsdam to encounter the formidable Stalin and the equally formidable Churchill (succeeded after the British elections by Clement Attlee). But he proved unawed, and the consensus is that despite concessions which had been yielded by Roosevelt at Yalta, Truman took a firm stance toward Stalin. The main result of the Potsdam conference may have been a hardening of attitudes between East and West. He also took in stride the staggering news that the U.S. had successfully exploded the world's first atomic bomb at Alamogordo. After taking all advice about the probable cost of human lives of an invasion of Japan, he made the fateful decision to drop the first atomic bomb. Once he had made it, he went to bed and to sleep. "I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubt that it should be used." His philosophy was, "If you've done the best you can—if you have done what you have to do—there is no use worrying about it because nothing can change it."

The postwar period presented Truman with the dual challenge of containing Communism and saving the European community from imminent economic collapse. His answer was the Marshall Plan, which said in effect that the U.S. was willing to help any European nation, including the Soviet Union, but Europe itself must decide just how the aid should be applied. Winston Churchill called it "the most unsordid act in history." Truman was similarly sure-handed when the Russians blockaded Berlin. He responded with a stratagem the Russians had not counted on—an airlift that was at once a magnificent demonstration of U.S. logistics and resolution.

The Russians never could understand the flatly American character that Truman so stubbornly embodied. When the Truman Administration offered to share with the world, Russians included, the control of atomic weapons, the Russians circled the proposal as warily as wolves sniffing at a bait of poisoned meat. When they sent their Korean satraps across the 38th parallel, they were stunned when Harry Truman decisively mobilized U.S. air and naval support for South Korea prior to receiving the sanction of Congress or the United Nations.

However impressive he seemed in the eyes of other people in other countries, Harry Truman was far from a hero in the eyes of his own countrymen in the days immediately following the war. He was beset most dramatically by a strike in the coal mines and a threatened walkout on the railroads. Truman "solved" these with characteristic brusqueness—he seized the mines and the railroads. In the resulting uproar, settlements were reached, but the rancor remained.

His popularity stood at a low ebb of 36%, and it was a sullen convention that met in steamy Philadelphia. The delegates kept Truman waiting for hours before they nominated him. But at 2:00 a.m., Harry Truman marched into that hall of surly, tired, dispirited delegates in an outrageous ice-cream suit that only a haberdasher from Missouri would dare wear, and brought them shouting to their feet. He would summon back the recalcitrant "Do nothing" G.O.P. Congress into special session—a "Turnip Day" session in his farmer's boy vernacular—and demand that the Republicans pass all the bills they had claimed they wanted to pass. During the campaign, while the Republicans' Thomas Dewey, svelte and calm and dignified in his Wall Street lawyer's clothes, sat back in smug confidence ("Had enough?"), and while the Dixiecrats organized a splinter party of the South under Strom Thurmond, "little old Harry Truman" took to a train and whistle-stopped the country, addressing any crowd at any station stop no matter how small the crowd or how minor the town, and "gave them hell." He ended his speeches by introducing his wife Bess. Would they like to meet "the boss," or sometimes "the madame"? And Bess Truman would appear from inside the railroad car, a nice woman who always looked as if her feet hurt.

And so, somehow, this feisty cockerel of a man won the election. He won, because more than any of his rivals, he had done what the plain American would have done in his place.

Just who was Harry Truman? He was a son of a more or less failed Missouri farmer. Harry himself, who should have been a farm boy, became instead somewhat of a scholar. Because the family's money ran out, he never went to college, but he read and went on reading every book in every library he was near. World War I gave him an opportunity of sorts—he had joined a National Guard company, and soon took over as commander of an artillery battery in France. Extraordinarily enough, this bespectacled fellow from down on the farm stood for no nonsense, and became a lifelong hero to the men of his Battery D. The war over, he tried briefly to become an entrepreneur in the haberdashery business, and just as quickly failed. But he became a protégé of Tom Pendergast, who needed an honest face for his dishonest organization, and when, in 1936, Pendergast needed a Senator with an incorrupt image, Harry Truman was his man.

After a routine first term, the junior Senator from Missouri established a reputation of his own as chairman of a subcommittee set up to check on war expenditures. In the next several years, the Truman committee uncovered countless instances of waste and corruption in the award of war contracts or the negligence of war contractors. His yapping committee was the thing that kept war contractors honest, and in 1944 Roosevelt rewarded him by picking him for Vice President.

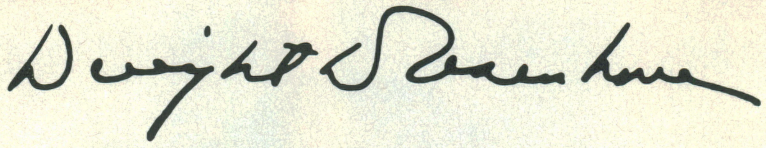
Succeeding a gentleman "farmer" who had never pulled a weed in his life, Truman was almost aggressively antiaristocratic. He never developed illusions of grandeur, but he ferociously defended the dignity of the office of President. Of his firing of MacArthur, he said, "I didn't fire him because he was a dumb son of a bitch, although he was, but that's not against the law for generals... I fired him because he wouldn't respect the authority of the Presidency."

In 1952, when he deemed his job done, Truman declined to run for re-election. He was content to write his memoirs, build his library and travel with no panoply or panache across the country, stopping at motels and dining at lunch counters. He wore his common-man image as doggedly as if it were a uniform he was proud of. It served him well. Somehow, he made Americans proud to be common.

Painting by Thomas E. Stephens: Private Collection

Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961)

I come from the very heart of America.



Screaming eagle patches on their battle jackets, cocoa-and-linseed-oil camouflage on their faces, the officers and men of the 101st Airborne Division thronged around the Supreme Commander on the afternoon of D-day minus one. Dwight Eisenhower moved about informally and cheerfully, with his war-winning grin, his casual banter: Where are you from? What did you do in civilian life? How many bushels per acre did you raise? One of the paratroopers was licking at the camouflage mixture on his lips. "Does it taste good?" Ike asked. "Damn good," said the paratrooper, laughing.

At the last airfield he visited, Ike watched the paratroops climbing into their planes en route for the highly hazardous—some said murderous—night drop into the marshlands of the Cotentin Peninsula behind Utah Beach. Ike swallowed hard and his eyes blinked hard. "Good luck," he shouted, holding back the tears. He raised his hand and waved. "Good luck, and godspeed."

That morning Ike had visited British soldiers as they loaded into Landing Craft Infantry for their role in the seaborne assault on the Normandy coast. Ike was, as Winston Churchill once remarked, "a creative, constructive and combining genius," and he was commanding a D-day attack force of more than 156,000 British and Canadian as well as American troops, along with a scattering of Free French. "This is an Allied battle," he said. "Men will be praised or blamed for what they do, not for their nationality." In his pockets were three good-luck coins—one American, one British, one French.

In World War II, Supreme Commander Dwight David Eisenhower led Allied forces of approximately 4 million men to one of history's most complete victories with his own brand of welding humanity and sensible coalition building. Ike and his men also knew why they fought in this war. "To preserve his freedom of worship, his equality before the law, his liberty to speak and act as he sees fit, subject only to provisions that he trespass not upon similar rights of others—a Londoner will fight," said Ike. Then he added: "So will a citizen of Abilene." As twice-elected President of the U.S., Ike attempted to unify the nation and lead it through the calm and consolidation he felt the country desperately needed after two wars within less than a decade.

Dwight Eisenhower was born Oct. 14, 1890, in Denison, Texas, and was moved as an infant to Abilene, Kans. His father, a creamery mechanic, and his mother, both members of the River Brethren, a Mennonite sect, raised six boys on an income that rarely exceeded $100 a month. The family was so poor that Ike had to wear his mother's button-top shoes to school. He and his brothers worked in the Belle Springs Creamery, pulling ice, washing cream cans and firing furnaces, and they held together in their share of neighborhood fights. Ike once took on a bigger boy, Wesley Merrifield, in a drawn battle in a vacant lot at Third and Broadway that lasted an astonishing two hours. Said Wes, who was to become superintendent of grounds and buildings at St. John's Military Academy, Delafield, Wis.: "Ike, I can't lick you." Ike gritted through swollen lips, "Wes, I haven't licked you."

Ike was encouraged by another Abilene friend, Everett E. ("Swede") Hazlett Jr., to take up a service career and, in June 1911, after passing qualifying examinations (he was too old for Annapolis), he entered the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. There he was brought along by Football Trainer Marty Maher as a halfback of All-America potential. Ike once helped bring down Carlisle's immortal Jim Thorpe: "Well, we timed it just right. We gave him the old high-low, the old one-two, just like that. We were sure we'd laid him out for good. But do you know what that Indian did? On the very next play, he took the ball and went right through us for ten yards." But Ike broke his knee in the very next game, against Tufts. His football career was over. He graduated 61st in his class of 164, rated by at least one instructor as "a not uncommon type."

After Stateside service in World War I and marriage to Denver's vivacious belle, Mamie Doud, Ike was thrown some useful forward passes by his commanding officer in the Canal Zone, Brigadier General Fox Conner. Encouraged to study military history and advanced strategy, Eisenhower was well prepared for the Army's Command and General Staff School: out of his class of 275, he graduated first. As Chief of Staff of the Third Army in the Louisiana maneuvers of 1941, after years of staff service to Douglas MacArthur in Washington and the Philippines, Ike planned movements of 270,000 men. His virtuoso performance was disturbed mainly by General George S. Patton Jr., who led a force of tanks on to a ridge that commanded miles of country behind Ike's lines. Ike declared profanely that Patton *could* not be there. But Patton was.

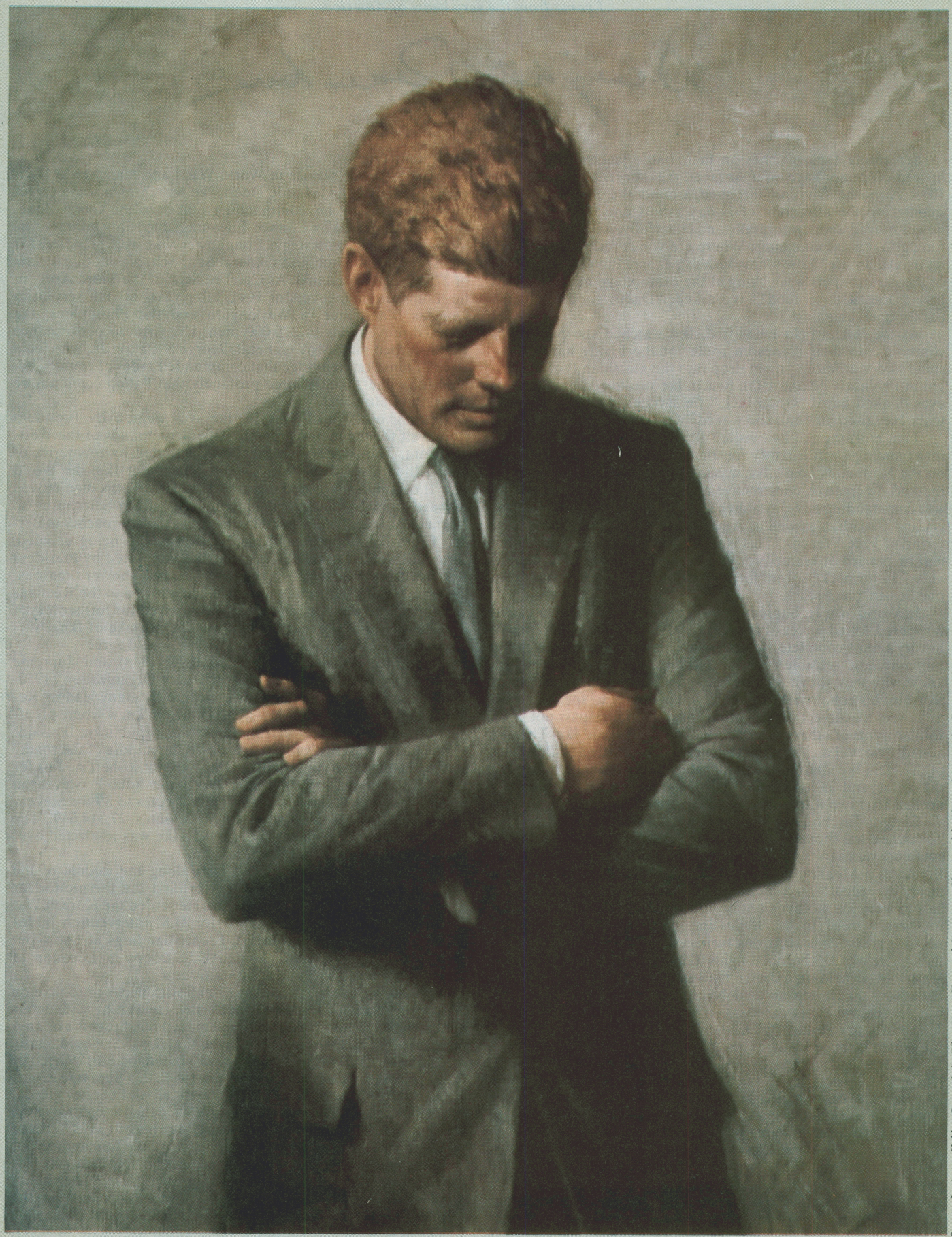
Throughout World War II, Ike was named by President Roosevelt for the major supreme Allied commands of the Western front. The Allied statesmen were haunted by memories of inter-Allied discord in World War I but, under Ike, the World War II coalition succeeded miraculously. He and his men moved forward from North Africa through Sicily, from Salerno on to Normandy, from the Battle of the Bulge to the approaches to Berlin. There Ike stopped, and his decision is still being debated. Churchill wanted to take Berlin, but Ike, supported by President Roosevelt, let the city fall to the Russians. Eisenhower's reasons: the area around Berlin had already been allotted to the Russians as a zone of occupation, and there was no need for further loss of life. History may say that the halt was the mistake of Ike's wartime career; few of his soldiers, still living, would agree.

Appointed Army Chief of Staff (1945-1948) and Supreme Commander for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (1950-1952), Eisenhower was sought as President by many leading Republicans and Democrats, few if any of whom knew where his affiliations actually lay. Declaring himself a Republican, Ike said: "The path to America's future lies down the middle of the road." In 1952 he defeated conservative Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft for the G.O.P. nomination and liberal Democrat Adlai E. Stevenson for the Presidency. Ike won 442 electoral votes to 89 for Stevenson, 33,936,137 popular votes to Stevenson's 27,314,649. The landslide slogan was I LIKE IKE. In 1956 Ike was re-elected over Stevenson by a somewhat larger margin.

As President, Ike did indeed lead along the middle of the road. In international relations, he fortified the thermonuclear deterrent while exploring coexistence. He settled the Korean War for a draw and resisted demands for U.S. intervention in Indochina. He opposed the British-French landings at Suez—but then, two years afterward, landed U.S. troops in Lebanon to shore up the world's still-shakiest status quo.

In domestic affairs, President Eisenhower declined to take on Wisconsin's Senator Joseph R. McCarthy. He was, he said, determined "never to admit that he has damaged me, upset me or anything else." In fact, he rightly believed that the U.S. would finally recognize McCarthyism for what it was. Ike made Earl Warren of California the Chief Justice and, in 1954, the Supreme Court came out for school integration "with all deliberate speed." When Arkansas' Governor Orval Faubus defied a court decree, Ike sent federal troops to Little Rock. But he still said, "I have very little faith in the ability of law to change the human heart or eliminate prejudice." Ike was criticized for his frequent golf, admired for his painting and contract-bridge expertise. "The vitality of the man!" exclaimed incoming President Kennedy in the spring of 1961. "Ike—as healthy and ruddy and as vital as ever."

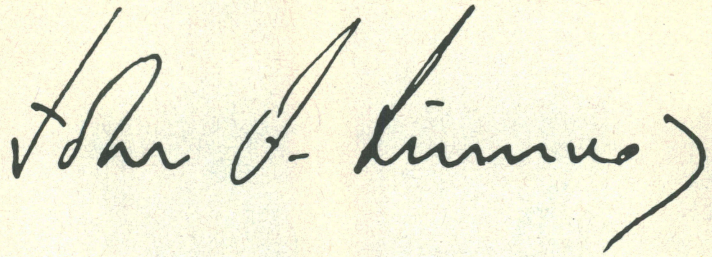
On March 28, 1969, after a remarkable aggregate of seven heart attacks, Dwight David Eisenhower—Ike—died. His legacy was immense: victory in war and consolidation in peace.



Painting by Aaron Shikler. Copyright by White House Historical Association. Photograph by National Geographic Society

John F. Kennedy (1961-1963)

Sure it's a big job.
But I don't know anybody who can do it any better than I can.



More often than not, the American people have been drawn to a father image—stern, stolid or benevolent—in their Presidents. But in John Fitzgerald Kennedy, they chose a gallant young knight with a boyish smile and a tousled shock of brownish hair. To the nation, he offered a Camelot revisited. To young people, he offered something else, something very special. At his Inauguration, he cried: "Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans." And when his torch was extinguished, a light went out for a generation of youth.

Handsome, intelligent, articulate, combining Irish charm with Irish toughness, a war hero with wealth and a dazzling wife, he seemed to so many to have so much. His political bloodlines were strong: paternal Grandfather Patrick Joseph Kennedy was an old-style ward heeler, a Boston saloonkeeper dispensing free lunch and patronage in return for local power; maternal Grandfather John Francis ("Honey Fitz") Fitzgerald was a song-and-jig politician, twice mayor of Boston and a U.S. Congressman. When Joseph P. Kennedy and Rose Fitzgerald were married, the occasion blended an abiding love with political coalition—though Joe Kennedy went on to amass a more than $200 million fortune not in politics, but as a hip-pocket financier in banking, oil, motion pictures, real estate, Scotch whisky and gin.

"We soon learned," said Jack, the second of nine children, "that competition in the family was a kind of dry run for the world outside." The most strenuous battles were between Jack and his older brother, Joe Jr. "Let 'em fight," said Old Joe. "The important thing is that they fight together." They did—all the way through Choate, a term at the London School of Economics and, finally, Harvard. Jack graduated *cum laude* in 3½ years and, at the suggestion of New York *Times*man Arthur Krock, rewrote his thesis into a bestseller, *Why England Slept.*

Shortly after midnight on Aug. 2, 1943, Navy Lieut. John Kennedy's torpedo boat, PT 109, was sliced in half by a Japanese destroyer in the Solomons. The young skipper's efforts to rescue his crew—he towed one injured shipmate by his teeth in the dark waters despite his own badly injured back—won him the Navy Medal. Still recovering in a Stateside hospital, he learned that his older brother had been killed in the explosion of a plane on a secret mission over the English coast. Jack would fill the political niche his father had carved for Joe Jr. "I told him Joe was dead and it was his responsibility to run for Congress," recalled his father. "He didn't want to. But I told him he had to."

In 1946, renting a carpetbagger residence in a staunchly Democratic Boston district to qualify for the ballot, the new kid in the neighborhood defeated eight primary opponents—old Honey Fitz stood on a table to sing *Sweet Adeline* in celebration—and was easily elected in November. He took his place in the House the same day as another freshman member, Richard M. Nixon of California.

With a $1 million trust fund conferred by Old Joe on Jack (as on all the other children) at age 21, John F. Kennedy could afford to have some fun out of politics, and he did. "The political world is stimulating," he said. "It's the most interesting thing you can do. It beats following the dollar." Perhaps the most engaging thing about his career—including his Presidency—was his enormous zest for political gamesmanship. In 1952, with the clan ebulliently behind him (Brother Bobby was campaign manager, Rose and the Kennedy girls gave political tea parties), Jack edged Republican Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. for the U.S. Senate. The next year he acquired another political asset by marrying Jacqueline Lee Bouvier, 24, socialite and sometime inquiring photographer for a newspaper, in an opulent Newport, R.I., wedding. They had met at a friend's dinner party, where he said, "I leaned across the asparagus and asked her for a date." To the end of his life, he was proud of displaying both her beauty and her talent. "I am the man," said President Kennedy after a 1961 meeting with France's Charles deGaulle, "who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris, and I have enjoyed it."

Almost immediately after losing the 1956 vice-presidential nomination by 38½ votes, Jack Kennedy—and all the other Kennedys—started the surge that brought him the Democrats' first-ballot Presidential nomination in 1960. In the general-election campaign, Republican Richard Nixon was a perfect foil—especially in the first of four televised debates, in which Nixon played a black-bearded heavy to Kennedy's golden boy. Overcoming the qualms of many who feared a Vatican influence on the White House, Kennedy won by a scant 120,000 votes to become the nation's first Roman Catholic President. His inaugural address, delivered in 20° cold (Kennedy took off his overcoat) with the sun reflecting blindingly off newly fallen snow, offered the nation an ageless challenge: "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

For the next 34 months, Washington was a place of boundless excitement: art, music and dance in the White House ("What joy that literacy is no longer prima-facie evidence of treason," said John Steinbeck), Jack in his rocking chair or with his feet propped up on the Oval Office desk, Caroline and John-John popping in and out of high policy conferences. During those heady days, everything was done with energy, but it was an energy controlled by style.

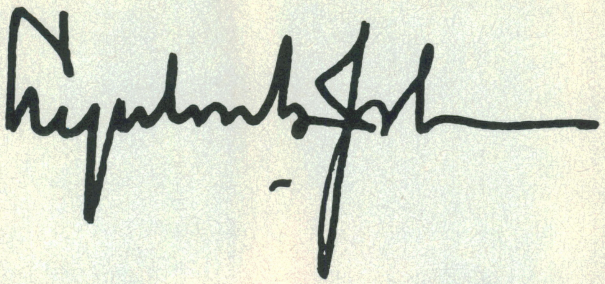
There was excitement too in his conduct of affairs both foreign and domestic. He ruthlessly cracked down on the steel industry when he felt he had been doublecrossed by a price hike. He sent U.S. marshals and National Guardsmen to the University of Mississippi when Governor Ross Barnett precipitated a crisis over the court-ordered admission of a black, James Meredith. He ordered 1,500 armored troops down the *Autobahn* when the Communists threw up the Berlin Wall and threatened to block access to West Berlin. For 13 days in October 1962, while the world trembled, Kennedy stared down Nikita Khrushchev, deployed a naval blockade and forced the Soviet Union to remove the missiles it had sneaked into Cuba. Only once did John Kennedy appear to lose the brash confidence that was his family's hallmark. That was during the Bay of Pigs debacle, a CIA-backed operation to deliver Cuba from Castro, which was militarily and diplomatically doomed from the start. When it was over, the President was disconsolate, and an aide remarked: "This is the first time Jack Kennedy ever lost anything."

But he was given little time—too little, as it turned out—to prove that his Presidency could have as much substance as it had style. In Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963, his life was ended by an assassin named Lee Harvey Oswald, whose motives remain a subject of doubt and high controversy. When he took office, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was 43, the youngest man ever elected President of the U.S. On that day in Dallas he was 46, the youngest President ever to die. "So now he is a legend," said Jacqueline Kennedy, "when he would have preferred to be a man."

Original cover for TIME by Peter Hurd

Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969)

Some are always writing that I'm a back-room operator. How would you like your little daughter to read that you are a "back-room operator," a "wire puller" or a "clever man"?



Lyndon Baines Johnson was perhaps the most effective floor leader the U.S. Senate has ever had. He was often described as being an arm twister, but he wasn't. Instead, with his long, strong fingers, he would take firm grasp just above an elbow and then squeeze—hard. Johnson had other techniques for making men feel at a disadvantage. When he shook hands, he would not let go for what seemed an interminable length of time, meanwhile saying, "I can always tell about a man from the way he shakes hands." Or he would peer closely at someone's face and say, "My ole Daddy always told me never to trust a man who can't look you straight in the eyes." When it came to legislation, he was an alltime master at getting what he wanted. He knew where the political bodies were buried, and he was not in the least reluctant to threaten to disclose the locations. He was expert in the use of the *quid pro quo:* his support (which was generally decisive) of a Senator's pet bill aimed at the folks back home, in return for the Senator's vote on major legislation.

But his favorite approach was pure persuasion. "Come now, and let us reason together," he was fond of saying, after *Isaiah,* and he could reason on behalf of the national interest with rare intensity and eloquence. For Lyndon Johnson had a dream for America—for a bountiful America that bestowed its blessings on all citizens, old and young, black and white, those born to wealth and those arisen from poverty.

Lyndon's father, Sam Ealy Johnson Jr., was a member of the Texas legislature and a man of colorful, often crude manners. Young Lyndon learned politics at his daddy's knee, accompanying him to the legislature or listening as his father jawed with cronies on the front porch of their family home. His mother, Rebekah Baines, was genteel and cultured, probably the only woman college graduate in Blanco County, Texas. After finishing high school at 15, Lyndon bummed his way to California, where he discovered the sour taste of poverty. "Up and down the coast I tramped, washing dishes, waiting on tables, doing farm work, and always growing thinner and more homesick." He never forgot the lesson, and his genuine passion for the poor helped craft his political career. Young Johnson went home, graduated from Southwest State Teacher's College in San Marcos, taught school briefly and then landed a job as secretary to Representative Richard M. Kleberg, son of the owner of the million-and-a-quarter-acre King Ranch. After that, except for a brief time out to serve in the Navy during World War II, it was politics all the way for L.B.J.

In 1934 he married Claudia Alta ("Lady Bird") Taylor, who had means, a charming personality and extraordinary skill in business. His family's financial future thus secured, Johnson was free to pursue his consuming ambition—that of winning friends and power in Congress. One of his earliest sponsors there was Texas' Representative Sam Rayburn, who was later to become one of the most powerful Speakers in the history of the House of Representatives. With the help of another influential Democrat, Maury Maverick, an F.D.R. protégé, Johnson was named Texas director of Franklin Roosevelt's National Youth Administration; in 1937, in a special election to fill a vacancy caused by death, Johnson ran for Congress as an all-out F.D.R. man against a field of five anti–New Deal candidates. He won, and was re-elected five times. Then in 1948, in a vicious contest in which each side accused the other of vote stealing, Lyndon Baines Johnson was elected to the U.S. Senate. Thereafter it became his true home.

As the Senate's Democratic leader (he was elected to the post in 1953), Johnson kept on the wall a framed quotation from the House of Commons' great Edmund Burke: "Those who would carry on great public schemes must be proof against the worst fatiguing delays, the most mortifying disappointment, the most shocking insults; and, worst of all, the presumptuous judgment of the ignorant upon their designs." Johnson himself was proof against almost none of these. He was angrily impatient of delay. He was wildly sensitive to criticism—occasionally to the point of demanding that publishers fire newsmen whose stories had offended him. Yet in the U.S. Senate, his personal flaws became formidable weapons, making Lyndon Johnson a force to be reckoned with, a man to be feared, and his superb political instincts made him a leader to be respected.

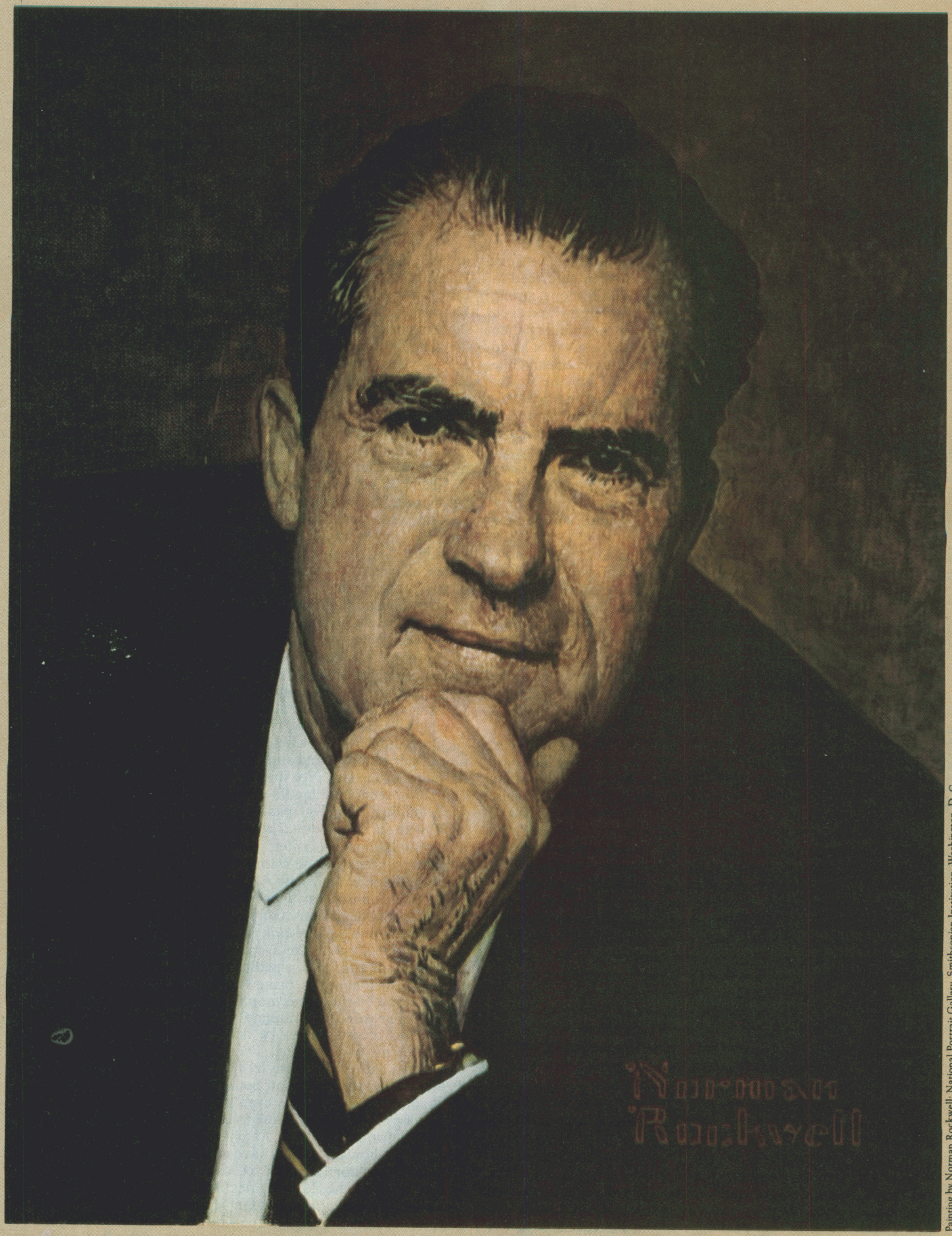
"He is," Lady Bird Johnson once said, "the most complicated, yet the simplest of men, and sometimes a really sad fellow." He was the saddest of all in not realizing his desire to be President of the U.S.—an office he thought denied to him by his Southern birthright. Still, he made an effort in 1960, only to be flattened by John F. Kennedy's steamroller. When Kennedy asked Johnson to be his running mate, he knew exactly what he was doing: he needed Johnson's help in the South, especially Texas—and Texas gave him the electoral votes he needed. On the other hand, Johnson, in accepting, was trading a position of great power for one of almost none. His decision remains mystifying: for a man of his restless energies, the vice presidency could only have been bitterly frustrating. President Kennedy recognized this and paid Johnson his praise. "Lyndon's job is the hardest one he could ever have," said Kennedy, "and he is performing it like a *m-a-n.*"

On Nov. 22, 1963, with Jacqueline Kennedy standing at his side in her bloodstained suit, Lyndon Johnson became the 36th President of the U.S. Not since Franklin Roosevelt's 100 days has the nation seen anything like the period that followed. At Johnson's bidding, Congress passed the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964, with its strong equal employment opportunity and public accommodations provisions. Also adopted were a vast anti-poverty program, a food-stamp plan, and the Job Corps to provide employment for young Americans.

In 1964 Johnson easily brushed aside the conservative candidacy of Republican Barry Goldwater, and in his second Administration the Great Society took full form with Medicare, aid to Appalachia, creation of the Department of Housing and Urban Development and, most significant of all, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which aimed to bring blacks fully into the nation's electoral process. For these accomplishments alone, Lyndon Johnson might have earned high ranking among American Presidents.

But his record was to be flawed by a national tragedy not wholly of his own making. The handful of military "advisers" that were sent to Viet Nam by Harry Truman had multiplied to 16,000 by the time Johnson became President, and he plunged the nation into the morass even more deeply, bringing the total U.S. troops in Viet Nam close to a staggering half-million by the time he left office in 1969. Angry war protesters chanted, "Hey, hey, L.B.J.—how many kids have you killed today?" A poetaster-politician, Senator Eugene McCarthy, made Viet Nam an issue and won 20 of the 24 delegates at stake in New Hampshire's Democratic primary in 1968. On March 31, 1968, Lyndon Johnson gave up, announcing that he would not run for re-election.

After four peaceful years on the banks of the Pedernales, he died of a coronary occlusion.



Painting by Norman Rockwell: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C.

Richard M. Nixon (1969-1974)

We often hear it said that truly "big" men are at their best in handling big affairs, and that they falter and fail when confronted by petty irritations.

He was named after Richard the Lionheart, who quested holy places. As a lonely little boy in Yorba Linda, Calif., he lay awake listening for the whistle of the night train, wondering where the tracks of his life might lead. He was a man of few pleasures (other than winning at almost anything), but he did admit that there was "nothing I like better than a rich milkshake"; yet because of weight worries, he deprived himself of the concoctions for years. He treasured snippets of praise (remembering phrases like "Great speech, Dick" and "Good going, Mr. Vice President" for years after they were uttered) as if they were gold from the Medes. He once told his wife Pat: "People in political life have to live in a fishbowl." But for himself he sought a crab-shell existence which, in the end, isolated him both from people and events and helped bring about his downfall.

Psychologists may draw what they wish from such matters. The fact remains that Richard Milhous Nixon's was an American tragedy, his transgressions casting a gloomy shadow over the good that he did. Most pitiably, he failed himself. "Life for everyone is a series of crises," he argued. He considered himself an authority on crisis and wrote a book on the subject *(Six Crises)*, with his personal experiences as the warp and woof. Reaction and response to crisis, he said, depend "on what the individual brings to bear on the situation—his own traits of personality and character, his training, his moral and religious background, his strengths and weaknesses." When his greatest crisis came, he fell short on almost all counts.

Like an envied Presidential predecessor, John F. Kennedy, Nixon was Irish (or mostly so) on both family sides; the name Nixon derives from Irish words meaning "he faileth not." But his inheritance was from the dark and brooding strain. His father, Frank Nixon, had not the good fortune bestowed by the shamrock but the constant, grinding bad luck of the black-bread crust. When he got a job in Ohio as a streetcar conductor, Frank discovered that his toes were unusually vulnerable to frostbite; when he moved to California and started growing lemons, the lemon market went bad. His one break came with his marriage to Hannah Milhous, member of a Quaker family in Whittier, Calif., who, by her son Richard's estimate (and that of almost everyone else who knew her), was "a saint." The Milhouses were well established, and they helped Frank Nixon set up a small grocery store–gas station in Whittier, where he managed to make a living—but not much more. There Richard arose every morning at 4 a.m. to fetch a truckload of vegetables from Los Angeles. At Whittier College, a small Quaker institution, he distinguished himself in debate, but not in football: as a tackle, he was a born sub.

Nixon attended Duke University Law School on a scholarship, and graduated third in his class. Returning to Whittier to practice law, he also engaged in amateur theatrics, and it was at a rehearsal of a mystery play called *The Dark Tower* that he met Thelma Catherine ("Pat") Ryan, who became his wife in 1940. During World War II, he had little difficulty in overcoming his Quaker scruples (Jessamyn West made his—and her—great-grandfather the central figure in her novel *The Friendly Persuasion*) to enter the Navy. "Many of us realized that if we were to have peace in the world we must fight for it," he said. "And so we did." But "Nick" Nixon, as he was known, did not have the opportunity for the feats of derring-do that came to Jack Kennedy; instead, he supervised South Pacific supply stations, played high-stakes poker and emerged from the war as a lieutenant commander with a $10,000 kitty from his winnings. In 1946, back in the U.S., he leaped at a chance to run for Congress as a Republican in his Whittier district against Democratic Incumbent Jerry Voorhis. Nixon, attacked liberal Voorhis as "a friend of the Communists," and was elected. Before long, his senses alerted by the Communist threat, he was traipsing from one Iron Curtain embassy to another, asking bemused Red diplomats how their countries felt about such things as freedom of speech and a free press.

From then on, Richard Nixon used crises as the rungs on a ladder, climbing ever upward—until the final fall. As a freshman Congressman on the House Un-American Activities Committee, he risked his political neck by "opposing the President of the United States" in backing former Communist Courier Whittaker Chambers, who had testified that former State Department official Alger Hiss was once a Communist spy. Hiss (who to this day protests his innocence) went to jail on perjury charges. The Hiss-Chambers case was enough to propel Nixon to the U.S. Senate in 1950 and to the G.O.P. vice-presidential nomination under Dwight Eisenhower in 1952. But the campaign was scarcely under way when another Nixon crisis came along, this time in the form of disclosures that admirers had raised an $18,000 fund to help defray his political expenses. Though the practice was neither illegal nor especially uncommon at the time, the "men around Eisenhower"—a Nixon euphemism—panicked, demanding that he resign from the ticket. Nixon's response, whatever else may be said of it, was a political tour de force, and the famed Checkers speech forced Ike to keep him on the ticket ("You're my boy").

In 1960 Richard Nixon was the natural successor to Eisenhower as the G.O.P. Presidential nominee, and though strongly favored at the start, he somehow managed to lose to Kennedy. Defeat was followed by disaster. He ran for Governor of California, lost, and seemingly bade farewell to politics with a hysterical tirade to the press: "Just think about how much you're going to be missing. You won't have Nixon to kick around any more." It seemed certain that Richard Nixon was through. But the man was nothing if not a fighter, and he clawed his way back, defeating Democrat Hubert Humphrey for President in 1968.

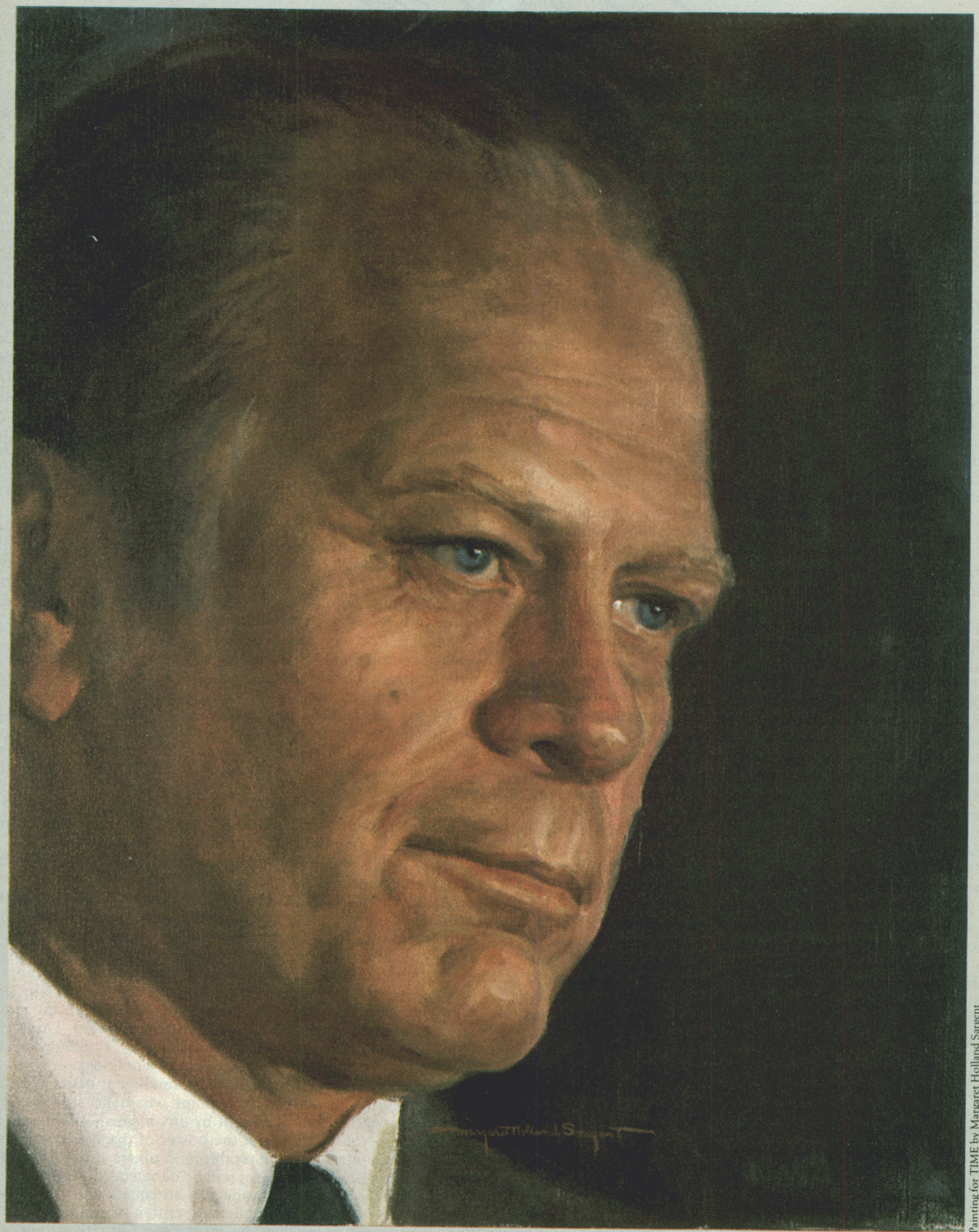
By any reasonable accounting, Richard Nixon's first term was a triumph. Mixing conciliation with toughness (as in the massive bombing of Cambodia), he withdrew U.S. troops from the odious Viet Nam War. In his visits to Moscow and Peking, he nurtured détente, and history may yet show that he opened the way to a long-lasting peace. In 1972 the U.S. rewarded him with an overwhelming mandate, as Democrat George McGovern carried only Massachusetts and the District of Columbia.

This, surely, was where the tracks from Yorba Linda had led for the lonely little boy.

And then—Watergate, still raw in memory. Watergate—the writhing of the bug on a pin (Nixon called it stonewalling)...the endless plotting...the lies, not only to the nation but to a loyal and trusting family...the tapes (with their erasures) and the transcripts (with their deleted obscenities)...the inexorable closing-in by Congress and the court...the shifting of blame, the obstruction of justice, the attrition of faith, the erosion of support...the inevitability of House impeachment and Senate conviction. Thread by thread, Watergate unraveled Nixon's entire Presidency as he found himself trapped in the web of his own making.

How could it have happened to an intelligent man? Was it a basic insecurity, developed to a point where he saw enemies everywhere who had to be fought by any means? Was it that he had grown so intoxicated with the power of the Presidency that he considered himself invulnerable and above ordinary standards? The psychological puzzles will be debated for years.

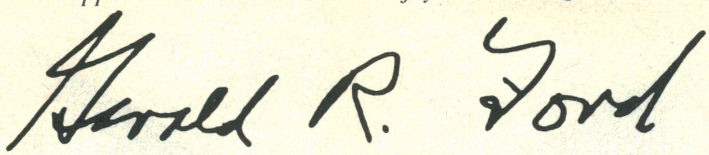
For Richard Nixon as President, it all ended with resignation on Aug. 9, 1974. Years before, he had written of another man: "I think I can understand how he must have felt. His career was gone. His reputation was ruined. His wife and children had been humiliated." His pity had gone out to Witness Whittaker Chambers. Today, the description would fit Richard Milhous Nixon.



Painting for TIME by Margaret Holland Sargent

Gerald R. Ford (1974-)

I can't wait to get to the office. Some days I am more disappointed than others, but I enjoy the challenge every day.



The East Room of the White House was filled with 250 guests, some of them still red-eyed from weeping at the emotional Nixon farewell of earlier that morning. Vice President and Mrs. Ford entered the chandeliered chamber and walked, amid applause that carried with it a desperate hope, to where Chief Justice Warren Burger was waiting. "Mr. Vice President," Burger intoned, "are you prepared to take the oath of office as President of the United States?" "I am, sir," Ford replied. He raised his right hand, his left resting on his eldest son's Bible, which was held by Wife Betty and opened to *Proverbs, 3:5-6*, which Ford says every night as a prayer.* Then, at 12:03 p.m. on Aug. 9, 1974, firmly repeating the oath set forth in the Constitution, Gerald Rudolph Ford Jr., became President of the United States.

His inaugural remarks were brief, unpretentious, candid—effectively crafted to ease the national tension which, in the final days, had become almost unbearable. "I am acutely aware that you have not elected me as your President by your ballots," he said. "So I ask you to confirm me as your President with your prayers." Simple words. Yet the Chief Justice of the U.S. sensed something deeper. "It worked," exclaimed Burger, seizing the hand of Senate G.O.P. Leader Hugh Scott, who stood near by. "Thank God it worked." He meant the system.

It had worked. It continues to work. And whatever his future may hold, Gerald Ford can find satisfaction in the fact that in his lawful succession he offered honesty and decency at a time when his nation most needed those qualities.

"I am an old lineman," he once said. "I've tried to be a good blocker for the running back who carries the ball." Now, in an hour of national crisis, he had been sent in as quarterback, and he had had little training for the assignment. The Oval Office is a long way from Omaha, Neb., where on July 14, 1913, a boy was born to Dorothy Gardner King and Lester Lynch King, a wool trader, who named his son after himself. The Kings were divorced two years later, and mother and son moved back to her home town of Grand Rapids, Mich. She married Paint Salesman Gerald Rudolph Ford, who adopted her three-year-old son and, in turn, gave him his own name—again, complete to the Jr.

At South High School, "Junie" Ford was the star center on a championship team and was named the most popular high school senior. He went to the University of Michigan on a scholarship, kept a B average in his studies and was named, in his senior year, the Wolverines' Most Valuable Player. He had offers from both the Detroit Lions and the Green Bay Packers, but instead signed on as assistant football coach at Yale. That led him, improbably, to Yale Law School, where, coaching on the side, he graduated in 1941, finishing in the top third of his class. Shortly after Pearl Harbor, Ford left his fledgling law practice in Grand Rapids to join the Navy. After service in the South Pacific he was mustered out, at 32, with the rank of lieutenant commander.

Back home he resumed his law career and developed his interest in politics. Jerry Ford was clearly a solid citizen, and his football and Navy reputation added a dab of glamour. And so, in 1948, he determined to make the race for Congress. During the campaign he called for a brief time-out to marry Elizabeth Bloomer Warren, an attractive divorcee and fashion coordinator for a Grand Rapids store who had studied dance under Martha Graham in New York City. As a "honeymoon," Ford treated Betty to a Michigan football game and a night in Detroit, then went right back to campaigning. He won easily and, as he is fond of noting, in a dozen subsequent congressional campaigns, he "never had any race where I got less than 60% of the vote."

Arriving in the House, Ford soon established himself as a good party lineman with his advocacy of a strong national defense. He achieved a wider popularity and respect on both sides of the aisle as a member who did his homework and played by the rules of the congressional club.

By 1965 Jerry Ford's diligence and dedication had earned him the position of House Minority Leader. But the most fateful happening of his congressional career came early, when he met another young Representative named Richard Nixon. Both were members of the Chowder and Marching Society, an informal organization of young Republican Congressmen who got together for a few drinks and a lot of political talk. Nixon and Ford struck it off, even to the extent of employing and enjoying the same football jargon ("He's a team player." "We'll huddle on that").

After Nixon's comeback election in 1968, Ford became one of the Administration's most loyal supporters in Congress. "The President and I have had a high identity philosophically," said Ford. When Nixon received his landslide re-election mandate in 1972, it seemed that everything was working for the G.O.P. Everything, that is, except a matter called Watergate and, in the autumn of 1973, the precipitate falling from grace, and office, of Vice President Spiro Agnew. In the first use of the procedures set up by the 25th Amendment to the Constitution adopted in 1967, Nixon nominated Gerald Ford to replace Agnew. His selection was received enthusiastically and without partisanship by his congressional colleagues, and Ford was confirmed on Dec. 6, 1973. Within nine months he was President.

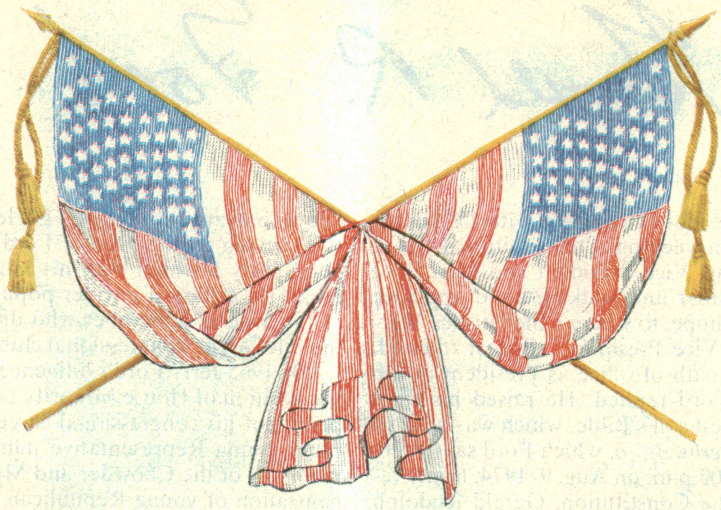
The new Chief Executive promised both candor and openness; he pledged to take the American people into his confidence. Yet after only four weeks in office, he granted Richad Nixon a full pardon for any crimes that the ailing ex-President might have committed during his term of office. That act, right or wrong, would haunt Ford for the rest of his term and become a factor in his efforts for election as President in his own right in 1976.

As for other matters, Ford generally let Secretary of State Henry Kissinger take the lead in foreign affairs and admitted as much. Eventually, however, the President shook up his command structure, taking away Kissinger's National Security Council directorship and firing his outspoken Secretary of Defense and the head of the CIA. As South Viet Nam and Cambodia collapsed, Ford harshly blamed Congress for refusing last-minute increases in military aid. Then he displayed his mettle and—belying his phlegmatic image—his temper, when Cambodian Communists seized the U.S. merchant vessel *Mayaguez*. The President swiftly dispatched American air, sea and ground forces to recover the ship and rescue its 39 crewmen. Gerald Ford followed the Nixon pattern of holding talks with foreign heads of state and at Vladivostok signed a preliminary strategic arms limitation pact with Russia's Leonid Brezhnev.

At home he warred with the heavily Democratic Congress, and in so doing demonstrated that the old lineman was still quite a blocker. He vetoed more than 50 bills—many of them calling for more spending—in less than two years in office. Under Gerald Ford, the U.S. economy moved out of deep recession; and though it is difficult to apportion credit for the improvement, the President would surely have had to shoulder responsibility if the recession had deepened.

Gerald Ford has often been the butt of jokes about his stolid approach to the Presidency. But he plainly values the unpretentious: "It's the quality of the ordinary, the straight, the square," he has said, "that accounts for the great stability and success of our nation. It's a quality to be proud of."

*"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."



Election Year 1976

The infant nation was still in its swaddling clothes when, during President Washington's first term, it was afflicted by political factionalism. So wide did the breach in political philosophies become between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton and their followers that both sides, fearful that their quarrel would kill the young republic, finally joined in urging Washington—as the one leader who stood above the battle—to stay on for a second term. He did so with vast reluctance.

Remarkably, the party system from which the U.S. today draws stability and strength finds its genesis in those early antagonisms that so threatened the nation's future. The Democratic Party is heir to President Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party as leavened by President Andrew Jackson's appeal to the masses and strengthened by the alliances formed by President Franklin Roosevelt with minorities and organized labor.

Republican Party bloodlines are somewhat more diluted. Hamilton's Federalist Party died during 24 years of power held by members of the Jeffersonian Virginia dynasty—Jefferson himself and Presidents Madison and Monroe. The Whig Party, composed mostly of former Federalists, Antimasons and other disparate groups who had in common their opposition to Andrew Jackson, elected two Presidents (William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor) and two Vice Presidents (John Tyler and Millard Fillmore) who succeeded to office. But by 1852 the Whigs had split under the stress of opposing sectional interests and approaching civil war: during the political campaign that year, the party's two great leaders, Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, both died, and Whig Presidential Nominee Winfield Scott received only 42 electoral votes.

In 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Bill (which in effect proposed repeal of the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and the Compromise of 1850, which excluded slavery from the Northwest Territory) offered a new rallying point for former Whigs, Free-Soilers, dissident Democrats, abolitionists and others who united in their opposition to slavery. Thus was formed today's Republican Party, which nominated its first candidates at a convention in Jackson, Mich. on July 6, 1854. From among those attending that convention eventually came six Michigan Governors, six U.S. Senators and 19 Congressmen, and in 1860 Abraham Lincoln, a former Whig, became the first Republican President. From that time on, every U.S. President has been either a Republican or a Democrat.

It is entirely appropriate that in 1976, the nation's Bicentennial Year, party primary elections were held in a record 29 states (plus the District of Columbia) to help determine the Democratic and Republican Presidential nominees. The result was one of the most exciting—and surprising—preconvention campaign years in history. Georgia's former Governor Jimmy Carter, almost unknown outside his home state at the outset, bolted ahead of the Democratic pack by winning the Feb. 24 New Hampshire primary. As a result of careful advanced planning, good organization, hard work and a pleasing personality, Carter kept right on going until, near the end of the primary season, he ran into a stunning series of losses, mostly in Western states. But Carter pulled it out with a June 8 primary triumph in Ohio, which not only gave him a big bloc of delegates but demonstrated his appeal in a major industrial state. The Democratic Convention in New York City was fairly cut and dried—except for Carter's choice of Minnesota's liberal Senator Walter F. Mondale as his running mate.

On the Republican side, Gerald Ford started with the advantage of being an incumbent President. After several early primary wins by Ford, California's former governor Ronald Reagan was swamped by Republican pleas that he withdraw in the cause of party unity. But Reagan stayed in the race—and, starting with North Carolina, began winning primaries. The result was a rousing G.O.P. in Kansas City, highlighted by the continuing "consternations" (as the State Chairman put it) of a Mississippi delegation torn down the middle; by a rare public popularity contest between the candidates' wives, Betty Ford and Nancy Reagan; by a strength testing but abortive effort to force Ford to name his vice-presidential selection before his own nomination, as Reagan had previously done with Pennsylvania's Richard Schweiker. Finally, in a past-midnight roll call, Ford won his Party's nomination by 117 votes, and next day named Kansas' Senator Robert Dole former Chairman of the Republican National Committee, a World War II Veteran who was wounded in Italy (his right arm is still crippled) as his running mate.

And so, in November of their nation's bicentennial year, the American people will make their choice. Whatever the outcome one thing will remain constant. The next President of the U.S. will be elected as the leader of a political party in a tradition rising from national wellsprings.

Recent Presidential Elections

Popular votes for major party candidates.

Plus: Congressional and gubernatorial seats at stake in this election (shown in italics) and the electoral votes by state (numerals in the bunting).

ALABAMA 9

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)149,231/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)275,075
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)195,694/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)280,844
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)324,050/Richard M. Nixon(R)237,981
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)210,732/Barry M. Goldwater(R)479,085
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)146,923/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)195,579
George C. Wallace(AIP)691,425
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)728,701/George S. McGovern(D)219,108
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)4, (R)3

ALASKA 3

1960: John F. Kennedy(D)29,809/Richard M. Nixon(R)30,953
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)44,329/Barry M. Goldwater(R)22,930
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)37,600/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)35,411
George C. Wallace(AIP)10,024
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)55,349/George S. McGovern(D)32,967
1976 Seats at stake: House (R)1

ARIZONA 6

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)152,042/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)108,528
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)176,990/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)112,880
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)176,781/Richard M. Nixon(R)221,241
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)237,753/Barry M. Goldwater(R)242,535
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)266,721/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)170,514
George C. Wallace(AIP)46,573
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)402,812/George S. McGovern(D)198,540
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (R)1; House (D)1, (R)3

ARKANSAS 6

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)177,155/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)226,300
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)186,287/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)213,277
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)215,049/Richard M. Nixon(R)184,508
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)314,197/Barry M. Goldwater(R)243,264
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)189,062/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)184,901
George C. Wallace(AIP)235,627
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)445,751/George S. McGovern(D)198,899
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)3, (R)1; Governor (D)

CALIFORNIA 45

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)2,897,310/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)2,197,548
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)3,027,668/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)2,420,135
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)3,224,099/Richard M. Nixon(R)3,259,722
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)4,171,877/Barry M. Goldwater(R)2,879,108
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)3,407,851/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)3,186,270
George C. Wallace(AIP)481,665
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)4,544,134/George S. McGovern(D)3,431,824
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)28, (R)15

COLORADO 7

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)379,782/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)245,504
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)394,479/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)263,997
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)330,629/Richard M. Nixon(R)402,242
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)476,024/Barry M. Goldwater(R)296,767
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)409,345/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)331,063
George C. Wallace(AIP)60,813
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)597,189/George S. McGovern(D)329,980
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)3, (R)2

CONNECTICUT 8

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)611,012/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)481,649
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)711,837/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)405,079
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)657,055/Richard M. Nixon(R)565,813
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)826,269/Barry M. Goldwater(R)390,996
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)556,721/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)621,561
George C. Wallace(AIP)76,650
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)810,763/George S. McGovern(D)555,498
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (R)1; House (D)4, (R)2

DELAWARE 3

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)90,059/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)83,315
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)98,057/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)79,421
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)99,590/Richard M. Nixon(R)96,373
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)122,704/Barry M. Goldwater(R)78,078
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)96,714/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)89,194
George C. Wallace(AIP)28,459
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)140,357/George S. McGovern(D)92,283
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (R)1; House (R)1; Governor (D)

FLORIDA 17

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)544,036/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)444,950
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)643,849/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)480,371
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)748,700/Richard M. Nixon(R)795,476
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)948,540/Barry M. Goldwater(R)905,941
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)886,804/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)676,794
George C. Wallace(AIP)624,207
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,857,759/George S. McGovern(D)718,117
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)10, (R)5

GEORGIA 12

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)198,979/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)456,823
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)222,778/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)444,388
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)458,638/Richard M. Nixon(R)274,472
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)522,557/Barry M. Goldwater(R)616,600
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)366,611/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)334,439
George C. Wallace(AIP)535,550
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)881,496/George S. McGovern(D)289,529
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)10

HAWAII 4

1960: John F. Kennedy(D)92,410/Richard M. Nixon(R)92,295
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)163,249/Barry M. Goldwater(R)44,022
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)91,425/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)141,324
George C. Wallace(AIP)3,469
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)168,865/George S. McGovern(D)101,409
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (R)1; House (D)2

IDAHO 4

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)180,707/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)95,081
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)166,979/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)105,868
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)138,853/Richard M. Nixon(R)161,597
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)148,920/Barry M. Goldwater(R)143,557
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)165,369/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)89,273
George C. Wallace(AIP)36,541
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)199,384/George S. McGovern(D)80,826
1976 Seats at stake: House (R)2

ILLINOIS 26

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)2,457,327/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)2,013,920
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)2,623,327/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)1,775,682
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)2,377,846/Richard M. Nixon(R)2,368,988
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)2,796,833/Barry M. Goldwater(R)1,905,946
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)2,174,774/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)2,039,814
George C. Wallace(AIP)390,958
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)2,788,179/George S. McGovern(D)1,913,472
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)13, (R)11; Governor (D)

INDIANA 13

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)1,136,259/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)801,530
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)1,182,811/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)783,908
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)952,358/Richard M. Nixon(R)1,175,120
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)1,170,848/Barry M. Goldwater(R)911,118
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,067,885/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)806,659
George C. Wallace(AIP)243,108
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,405,154/George S. McGovern(D)708,568
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)9, (R)2; Governor (R)

IOWA 8

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)808,906/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)451,513
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)729,187/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)501,858
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)550,565/Richard M. Nixon(R)722,381
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)733,030/Barry M. Goldwater(R)449,148
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)619,106/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)476,699
George C. Wallace(AIP)66,422
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)706,207/George S. McGovern(D)496,206
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)5, (R)1

KANSAS 7

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)616,302/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)273,296
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)566,878/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)296,317
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)363,213/Richard M. Nixon(R)561,474
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)464,028/Barry M. Goldwater(R)386,579
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)478,674/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)302,996
George C. Wallace(AIP)88,921
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)619,812/George S. McGovern(D)270,287
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)1, (R)4

KENTUCKY 9

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)495,029/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)495,729
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)572,192/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)476,453
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)521,855/Richard M. Nixon(R)602,607
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)669,659/Barry M. Goldwater(R)372,977
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)462,411/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)397,541
George C. Wallace(AIP)193,098
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)676,446/George S. McGovern(D)371,159
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)5, (R)2

LOUISIANA 10

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)306,925/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)345,027
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)329,047/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)243,977
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)407,339/Richard M. Nixon(R)230,980
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)387,068/Barry M. Goldwater(R)509,225
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)257,535/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)309,615
George C. Wallace(AIP)530,300
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)686,852/George S. McGovern(D)298,142
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)6, (R)2

MAINE 4

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)232,353/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)118,806
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)249,238/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)102,468
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)181,159/Richard M. Nixon(R)240,608
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)262,264/Barry M. Goldwater(R)118,701
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)169,254/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)217,312
George C. Wallace(AIP)6,370
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)256,458/George S. McGovern(D)160,584
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (R)2

MARYLAND 10

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)499,424/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)395,337
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)559,738/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)372,613
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)565,808/Richard M. Nixon(R)489,538
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)730,912/Barry M. Goldwater(R)385,495
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)517,995/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)538,310
George C. Wallace(AIP)178,734
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)829,305/George S. McGovern(D)505,781
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (R)1; House (D)5, (R)3

MASSACHUSETTS 14

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)1,292,325/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)1,083,525
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)1,393,197/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)948,190
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)1,487,174/Richard M. Nixon(R)976,750
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)1,786,422/Barry M. Goldwater(R)549,727
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)766,844/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)1,469,218
George C. Wallace(AIP)87,088
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,112,078/George S. McGovern(D)1,332,540
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)9, (R)2, Vacant-1

MICHIGAN 21

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)1,551,529/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)1,230,657
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)1,713,647/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)1,359,898
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)1,687,269/Richard M. Nixon(R)1,620,428
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)2,136,615/Barry M. Goldwater(R)1,060,152
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,370,665/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)1,593,082
George C. Wallace(AIP)331,968
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,961,721/George S. McGovern(D)1,459,435
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)12, (R)7

MINNESOTA 10

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)763,211/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)608,458
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)719,302/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)617,525
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)779,933/Richard M. Nixon(R)757,915
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)991,117/Barry M. Goldwater(R)559,624
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)658,643/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)857,738
George C. Wallace(AIP)68,931
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)897,569/George S. McGovern(D)802,346
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)5, (R)3

MISSISSIPPI 7

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)112,966/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)172,566
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)56,372/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)144,498
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)108,362/Richard M. Nixon(R)73,561
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)52,618/Barry M. Goldwater(R)356,528
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)88,516/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)150,644
George C. Wallace(AIP)415,349
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)505,125/George S. McGovern(D)126,782
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)3, (R)2

MISSOURI 12

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)959,429/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)929,830
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)914,299/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)918,273
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)972,201/Richard M. Nixon(R)962,221
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)1,164,344/Barry M. Goldwater(R)653,535
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)811,932/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)791,444
George C. Wallace(AIP)206,126
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,153,852/George S. McGovern(D)697,147
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)9, (R)1; Governor (R)

MONTANA 4

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)157,394/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)106,213
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)154,933/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)116,238
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)134,891/Richard M. Nixon(R)141,841
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)164,246/Barry M. Goldwater(R)113,032
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)138,835/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)114,117
George C. Wallace(AIP)20,015
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)183,976/George S. McGovern(D)120,197
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)2; Governor (D)

NEBRASKA 5

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)421,603/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)188,057
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)378,108/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)199,029
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)232,542/Richard M. Nixon(R)380,553
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)307,307/Barry M. Goldwater(R)276,847
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)321,163/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)170,784
George C. Wallace(AIP)44,904
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)406,298/George S. McGovern(D)169,991
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (R)1; House (R)3

NEVADA 3

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)50,502/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)31,688
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)56,049/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)40,640
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)54,880/Richard M. Nixon(R)52,387
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)79,339/Barry M. Goldwater(R)56,094
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)73,188/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)60,598
George C. Wallace(AIP)20,432
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)115,750/George S. McGovern(D)66,016
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)1

NEW HAMPSHIRE 4

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)166,287/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)106,663
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)176,519/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)90,364
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)137,772/Richard M. Nixon(R)157,989
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)182,065/Barry M. Goldwater(R)104,029
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)154,903/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)130,589
George C. Wallace(AIP)11,173
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)213,724/George S. McGovern(D)116,435
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)1, (R)1; Governor (R)

NEW JERSEY 17

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)1,374,613/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)1,015,902
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)1,606,942/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)850,337
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)1,385,415/Richard M. Nixon(R)1,363,324
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)1,867,671/Barry M. Goldwater(R)963,843
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,325,467/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)1,264,206
George C. Wallace(AIP)262,187
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,845,502/George S. McGovern(D)1,102,211
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)12, (R)3

NEW MEXICO 4

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)132,170/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)105,661
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)146,788/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)106,098
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)156,027/Richard M. Nixon(R)153,733
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)194,017/Barry M. Goldwater(R)131,838
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)169,692/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)130,081
George C. Wallace(AIP)25,737
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)235,606/George S. McGovern(D)141,084
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)1, (R)1

NEW YORK 41

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)3,952,815/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)3,104,601
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)4,340,340/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)2,750,769
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)3,830,085/Richard M. Nixon(R)3,446,419
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)4,570,724/Barry M. Goldwater(R)2,243,559
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)3,007,932/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)3,066,848
George C. Wallace(AIP)358,864
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)3,824,642/George S. McGovern(D)2,767,956
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (Cons-R)1; House (D)28, (R)11

NORTH CAROLINA 13

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)558,107/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)652,803
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)575,062/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)590,530
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)713,136/Richard M. Nixon(R)655,420
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)800,139/Barry M. Goldwater(R)624,844
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)627,192/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)464,113
George C. Wallace(AIP)496,188
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,054,889/George S. McGovern(D)438,705
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)9, (R)2; Governor (R)

NORTH DAKOTA 3

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)191,712/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)76,694
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)156,766/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)96,742
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)123,963/Richard M. Nixon(R)154,310
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)149,784/Barry M. Goldwater(R)108,207
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)138,669/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)94,769
George C. Wallace(AIP)14,244
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)174,109/George S. McGovern(D)100,384
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (R)1; Governor (D)

OHIO 25

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)2,100,391/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)1,600,367
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)2,262,610/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)1,439,655
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)1,944,248/Richard M. Nixon(R)2,217,611
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)2,498,331/Barry M. Goldwater(R)1,470,865
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,791,014/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)1,700,586
George C. Wallace(AIP)467,495
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)2,441,827/George S. McGovern(D)1,558,889
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (R)1; House (D)8, (R)15

OKLAHOMA 8

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)518,045/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)430,939
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)473,769/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)385,581
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)370,111/Richard M. Nixon(R)533,039
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)519,834/Barry M. Goldwater(R)412,665
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)449,697/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)301,658
George C. Wallace(AIP)191,731
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)759,025/George S. McGovern(D)247,147
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)5, (R)1

OREGON 6

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)420,815/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)270,579
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)406,393/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)329,204
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)367,402/Richard M. Nixon(R)408,060
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)501,017/Barry M. Goldwater(R)282,779
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)408,433/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)358,866
George C. Wallace(AIP)49,683
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)486,686/George S. McGovern(D)392,760
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)4

PENNSYLVANIA 27

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)2,415,789/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)2,146,269
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)2,585,252/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)1,981,769
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)2,556,282/Richard M. Nixon(R)2,439,956
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)3,130,954/Barry M. Goldwater(R)1,673,657
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)2,090,017/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)2,259,403
George C. Wallace(AIP)378,582
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)2,714,521/George S. McGovern(D)1,796,951
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (R)1; House (D)13, (R)11, Vacant-1

RHODE ISLAND 4

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)210,935/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)203,293
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)225,819/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)161,790
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)258,032/Richard M. Nixon(R)147,502
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)315,463/Barry M. Goldwater(R)74,615
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)122,359/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)246,518
George C. Wallace(AIP)15,678
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)220,383/George S. McGovern(D)194,645
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)2; Governor (D)

SOUTH CAROLINA 8

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)168,082/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)173,004
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)75,700/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)136,372
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)198,129/Richard M. Nixon(R)188,558
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)215,700/Barry M. Goldwater(R)309,048
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)254,062/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)197,486
George C. Wallace(AIP)215,430
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)477,044/George S. McGovern(D)184,559
1976 Seats at stake: House (D)5, (R)1

SOUTH DAKOTA 4

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)203,857/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)90,426
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)171,569/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)122,288
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)128,070/Richard M. Nixon(R)178,417
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)163,010/Barry M. Goldwater(R)130,108
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)149,841/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)118,023
George C. Wallace(AIP)13,400
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)166,476/George S. McGovern(D)139,945
1976 Seats at stake: House (R)2

TENNESSEE 10

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)446,147/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)443,710
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)462,288/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)456,507
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)481,453/Richard M. Nixon(R)556,577
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)635,047/Barry M. Goldwater(R)508,965
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)472,592/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)351,233
George C. Wallace(AIP)424,792
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)813,147/George S. McGovern(D)357,293
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (R)1; House (D)5, (R)3

TEXAS 26

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)1,102,878/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)969,228
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)1,080,619/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)859,958
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)1,167,932/Richard M. Nixon(R)1,121,699
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)1,663,185/Barry M. Goldwater(R)958,566
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)1,227,844/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)1,266,804
George C. Wallace(AIP)584,269
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)2,298,896/George S. McGovern(D)1,154,289
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)20, (R)4

UTAH 4

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)194,190/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)135,364
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)215,631/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)118,364
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)169,248/Richard M. Nixon(R)205,361
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)219,628/Barry M. Goldwater(R)180,682
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)238,728/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)156,665
George C. Wallace(AIP)26,906
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)323,643/George S. McGovern(D)126,284
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)2; Governor (D)

VERMONT 3

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)109,717/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)43,355
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)110,390/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)42,549
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)69,186/Richard M. Nixon(R)98,131
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)108,127/Barry M. Goldwater(R)54,942
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)85,142/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)70,255
George C. Wallace(AIP)5,104
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)117,149/George S. McGovern(D)67,613
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (R)1; House (R)1; Governor (D)

VIRGINIA 12

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)349,037/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)268,677
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)386,459/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)267,760
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)362,327/Richard M. Nixon(R)404,521
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)558,038/Barry M. Goldwater(R)481,334
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)590,319/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)442,387
George C. Wallace(AIP)320,272
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)988,493/George S. McGovern(D)438,887
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (Ind.)1; House (D)5, (R)5

WASHINGTON 9

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)599,107/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)492,845
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)620,430/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)523,002
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)599,298/Richard M. Nixon(R)629,273
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)779,699/Barry M. Goldwater(R)470,366
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)588,510/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)616,037
George C. Wallace(AIP)96,990
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)837,135/George S. McGovern(D)568,334
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)6, (R)1; Governor (R)

WEST VIRGINIA 6

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)419,970/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)453,578
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)449,297/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)381,534
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)441,786/Richard M. Nixon(R)395,995
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)538,087/Barry M. Goldwater(R)253,953
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)307,555/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)374,091
George C. Wallace(AIP)72,560
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)484,964/George S. McGovern(D)277,435
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)4; Governor (R)

WISCONSIN 11

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)979,744/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)622,175
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)954,844/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)586,768
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)830,805/Richard M. Nixon(R)895,175
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)1,050,424/Barry M. Goldwater(R)638,495
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)809,997/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)748,804
George C. Wallace(AIP)127,835
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)989,430/George S. McGovern(D)810,174
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)7, (R)2

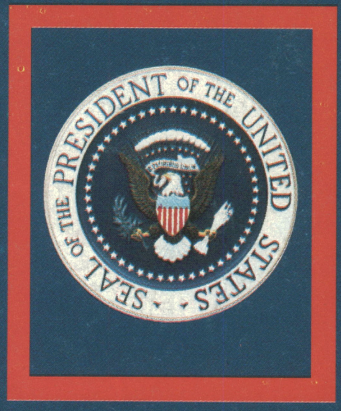
WYOMING 3

1952: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)81,047/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)47,934
1956: Dwight D. Eisenhower(R)74,573/Adlai E. Stevenson(D)49,554
1960: John F. Kennedy(D)63,331/Richard M. Nixon(R)76,551
1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)80,718/Barry M. Goldwater(R)61,998
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)70,927/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)45,173
George C. Wallace(AIP)11,105
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)100,464/George S. McGovern(D)44,358
1976 Seats at stake: Senate (D)1; House (D)1

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA 3

1964: Lyndon B. Johnson(D)169,796/Barry M. Goldwater(R)28,801
1968: Richard M. Nixon(R)31,012/Hubert H. Humphrey(D)139,566
1972: Richard M. Nixon(R)35,226/George S. McGovern(D)127,627

Photograph by Dirck Halstead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